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BANDWAGON



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THIS MONTH'S COVER

Harry Atwell, who took more circus press photos than anyone else, shot the classic pose used on this month's cover. He used a filter to include the clouds and exposed the picture with the sun in the right place. This lyrical but rather unrealistic scene was probably taken on the Ringling-Barnum Circus in the 1930s. It reflects a child's vision of the circus.

Atwell's circus negatives were purchased by the Journal Company, owner of the *Milwaukee Journal*, in 1956. It gave the collection to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin which turned it

over to the Circus World Museum when that facility had adequate storage.

THE PRESIDENT COMMENTS

We are on a roll. Two issues ago I predicted that the Circus Historical Society was on the verge of becoming financial stable and publishing a bigger and better *Bandwagon*. In the four months since then a number of events have occurred which have allowed us to reach that goal with a swiftness I could not have imagined at the time.

First, the response to the call for voluntary contributions with the dues was extraordinary, far exceeding expecta-

tions. We had 127 members who paid \$25; one who paid \$42; 13 who paid \$50; and 8 members who paid \$100 to belong to this organization. The number of individuals who gave extra represents over 10% of the total membership, and speaks volumes on their character and devotion to the CHS. This generosity raised over \$2100 for the treasury, which is far more than in previous years. If I may be pardoned for a personal observation, nothing has made me feel so honored and proud to be associated with the CHS as this outpouring of support.

Second, this issue lists 60 new members which is the fastest growth spurt we have experienced in our 48 year history. This is mainly the result of the hard work by Secretary-Treasurer Johann Dahlinger who has mailed out hundreds of brochures and applications to members of other circus-related groups. This obviously does nothing but good things for our coffers. It is certainly noteworthy that with this issue we have increased the press run of the *Bandwagon* for the first time in over a decade.

Third, our annual circusiana auction at the Milwaukee convention raised over \$2400, all of which will go toward the *Bandwagon*. Over twenty persons donated material for this event, a further reflection of the membership's commitment to the society. On a related note,

AVAILABLE BACK ISSUES OF BANDWAGON

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while all the receipts and expenses from the convention have not been tabulated, it appears the convention itself broke even.

Fourth, the cost of publishing the *Bandwagon* has been substantially reduced by the use of computer editing which eliminates the type-setting expense.

All of this has created that happiest of situations where revenues are increased while at the same time expenses are reduced. We saw a glimmer of the future in the new layout, larger type faces, and more pages in the last issue. This issue is the largest non-Christmas edition we have ever published, the result of our sudden prosperity and editor Pfening's computer wizardry.

We will not squander our good fortune nor be satisfied with past achievement. Plans are to continue to build the organization by aggressively seeking new members, and to continue to polish, upgrade and expand the magazine. Members are encouraged to write either Johann Dahlinger or myself for brochures and applications. Recent experience has shown a marked interest in our organization among circus professionals. All members can do their part by passing along information about the CHS to our friends in the business.

A number of members have asked the date and location of the 1988 convention. Nothing has been finalized, although we have a number of options. One is to hold it in conjunction with the Sarasota parade in January; another is on the Big Apple Circus in the East during the summer, perhaps over the Memorial Day or Labor Day holiday. Another possibility is presented by the Henry Ford Museum near Detroit which will be exhibiting Howard Tibbals' model circus during the year. Even holding it in Milwaukee during the Great Circus Parade for a third year in a row has not been ruled out. These sites are nothing more than ideas, and omission of a particular locale by no means reflects a lack of interest in it. I don't have a sense of what the membership wants in a convention and would be grateful to hear suggestions regarding the 1988 convention from any members. Comments on site, date and program would

all be most appreciated. Fred Pfening III

WILBUR DEPPE

Baraboo industrialist Wilbur Deppe passed away on June 27 at his home after valiantly fighting a diabetic condition and cancer for a number of years. He was 78. In his unique way he played an important role in the preservation of circus history.

He was a man of vision who believed in his city and quietly did things to create a better life. This interest in community development piqued his interest in the Circus World Museum even before it opened its doors in 1959 when he erected a desperately needed foot bridge across the Baraboo River. He did it in record time and charged only for the cost of materials.

His next gesture was to move five circus railroad cars from the railroad yards over eight blocks of city streets to the Museum. It took a week to move the stock car, coach, and bill car and two flats which came from Ringling-Barnum. Deppe didn't charge a cent.

He had a brilliant engineering mind which the Circus World Museum used to solve any number of problems. He was always ready to help with his ideas, energy, resources and friendship. For example, he designed, engineered and built the Moeller Hippodrome, and his low-boy trailers hauled circus wagons from all over the country to Baraboo.

He even started his own circus called Deppe's Classic Country Circus. John



Wilbur Deppe at the Circus World Museum earlier this year when he was honored for his recent gift of 11.2 acres of adjacent land and artifacts. Ron Brayer photo.

Herriott was hired as general manager, ringmaster and trainer. It performed at the Circus World Museum for seven summers, making Shrine dates the rest of the year.

In 1986 he convinced the Baraboo Industrial Expansion Corporation to contribute \$15,000 for the restoration of the Buffalo Bill ticket wagon. Late last year he and his son David gave the Museum the magnificent gift of 11.2 acres of adjoining land. Also included in the gift were a number of important circus musical instruments, props and artifacts.

The deeds of Wilbur Deppe should be shouted from the rooftops by the members of the Circus Historical Society. He furthered the cause as have few other individuals. C. P. Fox



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TWO CAR CIRCUSES

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr

One of the outstanding phenomenon of circusdom were the two and three car shows that flourished during the first two decades of this century. Operating around the fringe of the circus business at the time were a large number of little fellows, using titles like Teets Bros., Chamberlaine's Triple Plate, Deadwood Dick's Wild West and Spangler's Great Western. These show titles were unknown in most of the United States.

Actually these small shows traveling on a few cars were a hold over of the style used by the first circuses to travel by rail in the 1850s and 1860s. The early shows stored their overland wagons and shipped their equipment and a few animals in cars leased or rented from railroad companies.

By the 1860s a typical rail show was packed into one or more baggage cars, with the equipment being moved to and from the lot in knockdown wagons. This limited the size and amount of equipment that a show could carry. Many of the well know wagon shows continued overland because of these limitations.

In 1861 Thayer & Noyes, for example, stored their show wagons and went to rails. Palmer's Great Western made the same move in 1865. The full story of these early rail circuses is outlined in an article by Fred Dahlinger that appeared in the November-December 1983 *Bandwagon*.

The little outfits covered in this article were known as tunnel car or gilly shows. They traveled on a single passenger car and one or two large baggage cars, and were complete shows with a big top, side show, menagerie and performing animals. Some even presented

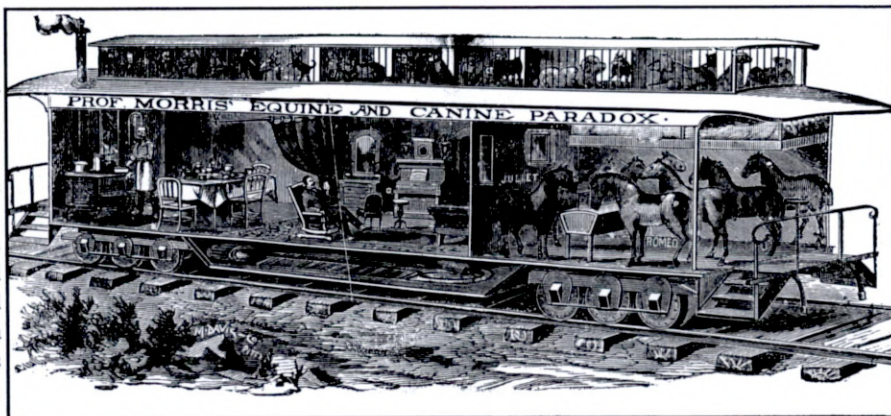
a small parade. All of the show equipment was crammed into the baggage car and the entire circus personnel slept and ate in the combination sleeping and dining car.

The equipment was carried to the lot in knockdown farm style wagons that were taken apart for loading into the baggage car and assembled each morning to "gilly" the equipment from the rail siding to the lot. There were usual-

with the show title. Large crowds did not collect at the rail station to view the unloading. The cars moved from town to town attached to regularly scheduled passenger trains. The show cars were inconspicuously black or dark green, not unlike the other standard coaches making up the train. Without evidence that the cars bore a circus troupe the townspeople were not aware of the fact that the show was so small

that it required so little transportation equipment.

The key to operating a two car circus was the standard provision of railroad passenger service that specified when a certain number of first class tickets were purchased a baggage car would be moved free. The cost of the tickets covered the cost of



This illustration from a small courier booklet shows a cutaway view of the one car used by the Prof. Morris Equine and Canine Paradox in 1888. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise noted.

ly two wagons. After the first wagon had been assembled, loaded and sent to the lot, the second wagon was put together and loaded. The horses were transferred to the second wagon after the other returned empty. The time required for a round trip to the lot was about the same as the loading time so it worked out smoothly. A dozen or so trips would be required from the train to the lot, and the same number at night. A team of horses was carried by the show, but often local stables provided horse power for the wagons.

The two car shows, unlike the big boys, did not arrive in town with great flash in brightly painted cars blazing

both cars. The cost of the tickets and the number purchased caused continuing confrontations between the shows and the railroads.

The December 1, 1899 issue of the *Billboard* contained an article by Al G. Fields, a minstrel show operator who used two cars, on the exorbitant rail rates. He stated that all Texas rail lines had an agreement covering rates demanded for theatrical companies which called for fifteen fares for the first fifteen people and two cents a mile per capita for all people over fifteen and fifteen cents a mile for the baggage car. The baggage car charge applied if the baggage car was empty or fully loaded. Fields further stated that the Southern Passenger Association charged one and one half cents per mile per capita for all shows of twenty five or more people and carried the baggage car free. If there were thirty eight or more people the charge was one and one half cents per



mile and both cars were free of mileage.

The August 4, 1906 *Billboard* contained a number of letters from various showmen concerning the rail charges. One letter stated that the Board of Southwestern Passenger Agents wished to increase transportation rates \$25 for one car and \$40 for two cars, a sixty percent increase. Jethro Almond reported that in 1905 the Southern Railway raised the rate on a private car from \$15 to \$25 for fifty miles or less. Over fifty miles it was fifty cents additional per mile. He further stated that most lines were charging \$25 minimum to move a car. Almond continued, "As to hiding people and throwing litter about the depots, this is wrong on showmen's part and should not be done. They charge us for up to twenty five persons on a car when we often have less."

R. L. Kerns of Eiler's Eastern Rip Van Winkle Co. wrote, "There is not one car show in ten which reports the actual number of people carried to the railroad company." Harry Ward wrote, "The Illinois Central carried two cars for one company from New Orleans to Memphis on a \$25 minimum for two cars and charged the next fellow \$25 for his coach and \$10 for the baggage car."

The amount paid to the railroad for each move was a constant hassle for the two and three car circus owners. It was a game for most; hiding all of the working men and not buying tickets for them was standard practice. Working men would be stashed in the possum bellies below the cars and jammed in with the canvas and other equipment in the baggage car. Each day a conductor arrived to inspect the passenger car, count the passengers and

The first show of the Gentry family used this car around 1890. The early shows that were proud of their name used it on the side of their cars.

check to see that there were tickets for each. After the conductor left people would literally come out of the woodwork.

In the December 18, 1915 *Billboard* Fields again wrote about the inconsistency of railroad tariffs. He reported that on May 1, 1915 the railroads filed notice that forty tickets and not twenty five, would be required to move a private car. He felt this was unfair, as the railroads were charging the same rates for a private car as they charged for the use of their system cars.

The little rail shows made a showing on the lot that equaled a fair sized wagon show, which was what most of the small towns had seen before. In fact nearly all of the two car shows had grown from wagon shows. Many were one ring, 10 cent affairs. The typical layout included a seventy to ninety foot big top with two middles with one ring and one stage. Most shows had a side show on the midway. The shows

The personnel of the one car Daniel Boone Wild West show is shown in Hastings, Nebraska, in 1891.



usually presented a creditable performance, but many of them also carried games of chance that found little approval by the local sheriff. That is the reason the title was changed frequently. With no title on the train cars, the only identification was the posters that advertised the coming of the enterprise. Some changed titles during the year, but many came back the next year under another name so the towners would not know that it was the same outfit that had been run out of town the prior year.

In his book *A Wandering Showman*, I David Lano tells of his experiences with the J. Augustus Jones two car Jones Model Plate Shows in 1906. Lano wrote, "In October we played Wytheville, Virginia....Wytheville was in a pretty lonely spot in the Appalachians--mountain country--where I knew all too well a strange inexplicable hatred of circuses and circus people sometimes manifested itself in violence and gun fighting. The trouble began when a hillbilly, for reasons known only to himself, suddenly went berserk and kicked our poor half-witted geek in the back, breaking two of his ribs.

"Poor Eddie the Geek had to be taken to the hospital. While we were trying to quiet him and ease his pain, the mountaineer tried to pull over a ticket box. The town officers did not interfere. I took the hillbilly by the arm and began talking to him gently, though I was not feeling gentle by any means. I led him away from the crowd. As soon as I had him out of their sight I let him have it--right on the jaw. He went down like a shot pig. I took his gun away from him and gave it to the town marshal. The local lawmen finally got this hillbilly off the lot and into town. There they released him and gave

him back his gun. I was at the time wearing a walrus mustache, as was J. Augustus Jones. The rampagious hillbilly came down the street after being escorted off the lot just as J. Augustus and his mustache came out of the local barber shop. The hillbilly took him for me. J. Augustus may not have been a good rider,

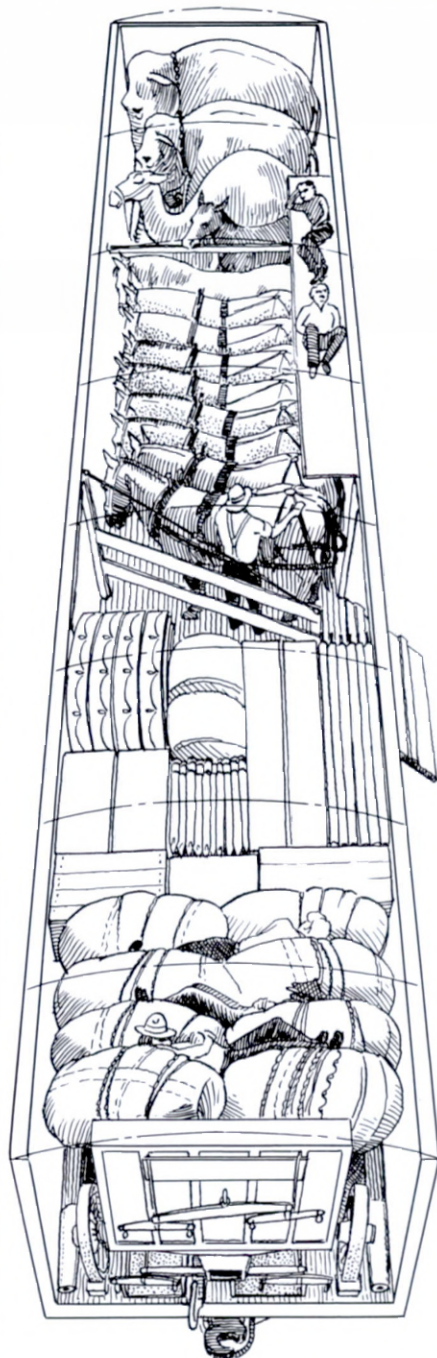
but he was a good sprinter. He outran the hillbilly to the circus train, with bullets whanging around him. The local law, of course, now wanted to arrest one or more of the circus men; hillbillys were outside the law, it seemed. To avoid arrest we had to agree to tear down the show, load up, and get out of town at once.

"As things stood, our railroad cars, then on a siding, were to be picked up the next morning at eight-thirty by a passenger train, but now J. Augustus called me to his stateroom--in which he was practically barricaded--and ordered me to get the district passenger agent to have the limited train which came through at twelve-ten a.m. make the pickup, which I did."

Lano told of an experience later in 1906 in a small Alabama town that was the home of a real circus-hater who was also the head man of the county. J. Augustus had been warned about him. The night show started without any trouble. Lano tore the side show down as soon as the performance started and loaded it on a gilly wagon. The candy stands were also torn down, but the front midway was left well lit up. Lano heard some shots and sent two guards with the wagon. A little later they came staggering back, beaten and bleeding. They reported the town's big man had stopped them and demanded money. As soon as J. Augustus heard what had happened, he hightailed it for his stateroom on the train. He and brother Elmer, only a few days before, had lined their room with sheets of iron. They were now safe from anything short of fire or dynamiting.

The Jones shows were all grift outfits, theirs as well as other similiar shows had left a reputation in many small towns. But the circus owners returned in any case, continuing to pull the same tricks. It is little wonder that they changed titles frequently.

The title of some of the cleaner shows remained the same year after year, and were welcomed. Mollie Bailey and Colorado Grant out of Sparta, Kentucky, were two of the shows that toured year after year. Others used titles that appeared on available posters from the shelves of various lithographing firms. Many of these titles had been used by larger short lived shows that



This drawing by the late Charles Amidon shows how a tunnel car was tightly loaded.

had ordered more paper than was used.

The small shows provided a training and learning experience for young showmen who became the future bosses for the larger flat car shows. A surprising number of the two and three car shows grew to large flat car operations. In 1887 the Hurlburt & Hunting Circus

traveled on three cars, the beginning of the Bob Hunting show that grew to ten cars in 1892. J. H. LaPearl had a seven wagon show in 1891. The following year he bought one rail car, and in 1893 he had a three car show. In its final year of 1899 it was in the ten car class.

The Gentry name was used for forty five years. The Prof. Gentry Dog & Pony Show played halls and traveled in a single combination rail car in 1889. In 1891 Gentry's Equine and Canine Paradox was on two cars, and by 1895 the Gentry brothers operated two two car operations. In 1898 they purchased the Sipe, Dolman & Blake show and the following year there were four Gentry units, each on four cars. By 1906 the Gentry show was a fifteen car train. In 1907 W. W. Gentry went on his own with a two car show. The Gentry title was later used by James Patterson and Floyd King on fifteen car shows.

The Norris Bros. Peerless Dog & Pony Show moved on two cars in 1894 and three cars in 1895. In 1901 it became the Norris & Rowe Circus and by 1902 was using five cars. By the time the show folded in 1910 it was a twenty car circus. In 1905 Norris & Rowe operated a second unit on two cars called Cozad Bros. Dog & Pony Show. Charles Burch and Nat Reiss purchased the Cozad show and operated it again in 1906 on three cars.

John H. Sparks started a wagon show in 1889, which went on rails in 1900 as a three car show. The show was not a true baggage car show, as one flat was used. However the balloon tunnel car carried the majority of the show equipment. Sparks went to five cars in 1906, seven in 1909, ten in 1913 and by 1923 it was a twenty car circus. Andrew Downie toured a three car show in 1910 and later owned the LaTena and Walter L. Main shows, each on fifteen cars.

The Sun Bros. started a wagon show in 1892 and moved to rails with two cars in 1902. It grew in size to nine cars during its last season in 1918 Rhoda Royal leased nine cars from Walter L. Main in 1900 and later operated large winter fraternal circuses. In 1919 he organized his last show as a three car gilly outfit. During the season he went to five and then six cars. In 1920



George Washington Christy toured a one car show in 1913 as Christy's Hippodrome Shows. From 1914 to 1917 the show traveled on one and two cars. During the 1918 season Christy was drafted and he sold the two car show to Elmer Jones. Jones used the Christy Hippodrome title a while

it was on fifteen cars and remained that size through the 1922 season. Royal announced in the *Billboard* that he planned to tour a two car show in the fall of 1922 after the big show failed, but no record has been found.

Tom Wiedeman operated a two car show in 1907. By 1914 he owned the Kit Carson Buffalo Ranch Wild West on twenty cars. Welsh Bros. went into the circus business in 1892 with a wagon show. In 1900 they opened a two car show in addition to the mud outfit. The show toured for many years, at times using as many as fifteen cars.

In 1909 J. H. Eschman returned from a trip to the Orient and found a two car circus for sale in California. He bought the show, placed his name on it, and toured for five years without a break, showing each day. He went to a flat car operation in 1915 with seven cars and in 1916 enlarged the show to ten cars. Vernon Seaver toured the Lone Bill Wild West on two cars in 1908 and from 1911 to 1914 he owned the Young Buffalo Wild West that used twenty one cars.

Floyd King served as a press agent on large circuses like Al G. Barnes and Hagenbeck Wallace prior to buying the Campbell Bros. two car show in 1919. Floyd and his brother Howard changed the name to Great Sanger and went on the road. They used the Sanger title through the middle of the 1921 season, when the paper ran out. They found a cache of Hugo Bros. lithographs and finished the season with that title. In the spring of 1921 the Kings purchased the eighty

The Teets Bros. Palmetto Shows was well known in the coal fields of Kentucky and West Virginia from 1902 to 1907.

foot tunnel car that Charles Sparks had used since 1900. In 1922 Floyd and Howard bought a Barnum & Bailey advertising car and added it to their train making four cars. That same year a deal was made with Col. M. L. Clark to bring his animals to the show. It was the M. L. Clark Circus that year. Rice Bros. paper was available in 1923 so that became the title. By 1924, under the Harris Bros. title, another car was added making it a five car show. This 1924 King show was different than most of the baggage car shows in that it carried a number of small wheeled wagons that loaded into the tunnel cars, much like the Ringling-Barnum show did when it moved back to rails in 1960. The Harris train included three tunnel cars, a sleeper and a combination sleeper-pie car. In 1925 the Kings operated the ten car Walter L. Main Circus. In late 1925 they bought the fifteen car Gentry show and then toured a ten and a fifteen car show each year through 1929.

The Skerbeck two car show was well known in Wisconsin following the turn of the century. This lot view was taken in 1904.

that season then changed it to Great Eastern Hippodrome. Remaining in the Army only a short time Christy bought new equipment in February of 1919 and again called the show Christy's Hippodrome. During the 1920 and 1921 seasons the show traveled on three cars. In 1922 it moved into the ten car class; in 1923 and 1924 the show used fifteen cars and became a twenty five car outfit in 1925. It remained that size until it was cut back to ten cars in April of 1930, its last year.

The North Warren, Pennsylvania Jones family, consisting of brothers John Augustus, Elmer H., Dick, Frank and Aleck, left their mark on circus history as the outstanding two and three car show operators of all time. J. A. and Elmer were partners in many shows, but J. Augustus generally operated larger shows than Elmer, who was called the "king of the two cars shows."

J. Augustus, born September 13, 1868, was the oldest and the most financially successful member of the family. His first effort on the sawdust trail was in 1892 when he took a small wagon show on the road under the title Jones Overland Circus. By 1898 he moved to rails using two cars on the Jones Model Plate Shows title which played towns near army camps during the Spanish American war. In 1900 he and Elmer had the Rice & Davis wagon show as well as a two car operation





John Augustus Jones operated baggage car shows as well as larger circuses. This is a 1916 photo.

called Indian Bill's Wild West show. In 1901 the Indian Bill show was enlarged to six cars and two more were added during the season. In 1902 the Jones Bros. used three titles, Cole & Rogers, Jones Model Plate and Jones New Empire. They may not have had three different two car shows, as they frequently changed titles on a single show during a season.

In 1903 the Indian Bill show was enlarged to a twelve car train, and the two car show was titled Jones Bros. Model Plate. In 1904 the Cole & Rogers show, with Elmer as manager, was on six cars, but was reduced to two for a winter tour. In 1906 the Jones Model Plate was on two cars and the Indian Bill and Cole & Rogers shows were combined on sixteen cars with the title being changed to Jones Bros. Enormous Shows. A third show on two cars in

1906 was titled Jones & Adams. During the 1907 season the large show continued under the Enormous title, with the two cars shows going under the Model Plate and West & Wells names, Elmer managing the later.

In 1908 J. Augustus operated a wagon show called Cole & Cooper, and the two car show using the Model Plate name. Elmer called his show King & Tucker that year. It is not clear which title was used on the flat car show in 1909; however the brothers used four titles that year, Model Plate, King & Tucker, Coulter and Coulter and Rice Bros. In 1910 J. Augustus toured the large show as Jones Bros. Buffalo Ranch Wild West on fourteen cars. Brother Richard joined out for the first time that year as part of the wild west unit. One two car show that year was called Jones Bros. Model Plate. Other titles used by the Jones brothers that year were King & Tucker, Coulter & Coulter, Cole & Rogers, Montgomery Queen and Parks & Banks. It is not known if these were all different shows.

During the 1911 season Elmer and J. Augustus took three two car shows out of their hometown of Warren, Pennsylvania, and two out of Texas, using the Cole & Rogers, Cole & Rice, Model Plate, Montgomery Queen and New Empire titles. In 1912 J. Augustus toured the Fred Elzor wagon show as well as a couple of two car shows. Elmer used the Montgomery Queen name on his show.

In 1913 J. A. Jones toured the Jones New Empire on two cars and a wagon show called Cole & Cooper. In a January 26, 1913 letter to Harry Bowman, J. A. Jones advised that he would open his show on two or three cars around April 1 near Knoxville. He stated that

Busby Bros. used three cars from 1902 to 1904. Their tunnel car shown here was like the large Sparks balloon tunnel car.



Elmer H. Jones was known as the "king of the two car shows." This photo was taken in 1916.

he was bringing his wagon show on three cars from Florida to Knoxville and would work towards Pittsburgh. He further said that Elmer, using the Cole & Cooper title, would handle the western show opening in March in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

In 1914 J. Augustus and Elmer joined with Henry G. Wilson to take out the Jones Bros. & Wilson show on fifteen cars. The two car unit was called Stone & Murray that year and was probably managed by brother Richard. In 1915 J. A. had a fifteen car show called Jones Bros. World Toured. J. A. had the Texas Bill Wild West show on an unknown number of cars in 1916 and Elmer had a the two car show called Hugo Bros. In 1916 the big show was Cole Bros. on sixteen cars and the two two car shows were called Hugo Bros. and Cooper Bros. In 1917 the Cole Bros. show used 20 cars, the largest number ever toured by J. Augustus. The two car shows continued under the same titles. In the fall of 1918 J. Augustus "Fish" Jones was kicked by a horse and died as a result on September 7. Richard withdrew from the circus business following his older brother's death. Mrs. Jones and brother Elmer dispersed the big



show. Elmer combined the Cooper and Hugo shows making a four car show which he called Hugo Bros. Elmer used paper on hand from the big flat car Cole show that told of eleven elephants and the like. This brought a lot of heat when the four car unit rolled into town. After 1918 Elmer H. Jones limited himself to the operation of two and three car circuses.

Many two car circus owners, wishing to make use of their rail cars during the winter, also operated UTC (Uncle Tom's Cabin) shows playing halls. These included Andrew Downie, the Welsh Bros., Leon Washburn, Tom Hargraves, Frank Adams, Al Martin, the Busby Bros. and R. M. Harvey.

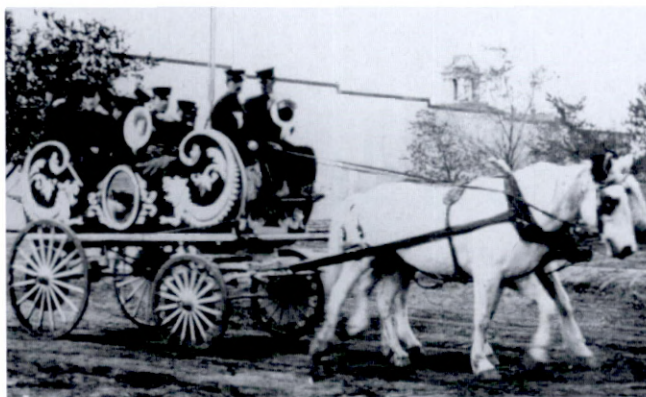
The baggage car shows were not all framed alike, although the railroad cars were all of the same general design but differed in length. One of the two cars, usually seventy feet long, would be the sleeping car. This car usually had a state room for the owner or manager in one end, and a kitchen and dining area at the other end. In the middle were berths for the performers and bosses. The baggage car was equipped with side doors as well as doors on one end that opened completely. Everything but the performers was loaded into the baggage car. Lead stock, horses, ponies, mules, and on some shows, an elephant, were loaded first, followed by small cages wagons. The canvas, poles, seats and props were loaded next to the end of the car with doors. The knockdown gilly wagons were the last to be loaded. The working men slept in the baggage car wherever they could find room.

From 1900 to 1910 there was

The King & Tucker title was used by J. A. Jones from 1908 to 1912.

quite a market for the show cars used by circuses, dramatic companies, minstrel and Uncle Tom Cabin organizations. A number of firms specialized in dealing with the show rail cars. The Arms Palace Horse Car Co. in Chicago; The New Jersey Car Works in Passaic, N. J.; Hotchkiss, Blue & Co. in Chicago; Southern Iron Equipment Co. in Atlanta and the Indiana Car Co. in Peru, Indiana all advertised almost weekly in the *Billboard*. Various showman would upgrade their equipment with newer, more modern cars and would advertise their old cars for sale. Sun Bros. Circus in 1911 offered a fifty four foot combination car for \$500. A post office box number in 1905 advertised a combination car for \$300. In 1912 Elmer H. Jones offered a car with three sections, a kitchen, berths and one state room, plus a thirty five foot baggage space, cost

This small bandwagon was used by the Stone and Murray show in 1914. It was later remodeled as a box type wagon to carry an air calliope on the larger Cole show in 1916.



\$900. In February of 1904 a one year old sixty seven foot Pullman, sleeping thirty people, was advertised at \$3000.

Bobby Fountain, a well known western two car circus operator, advertised a car for sale in February 1907. This was a sixty-two foot combination Pullman unit. He claimed it was the finest ever used for theatrical purpose, accommodating forty people. The car contained a fully equipped kitchen, a large sleeping and dining room, three fine staterooms, one especially suited for a star and a large office, with safe. Fountain stated that the entire car was furnished throughout in English walnut and had been painted and gold leafed by the Pullman Company nine months earlier. The price was \$2,950. He added that this was not an old, worn out tub, but a first class Pullman car.

A circus owner wishing to get started in the rail show class, or one wishing to purchase a larger or newer car had plenty of places to buy. A wagon show operator could move up to rails at a modest cost. The rail cars were the only investment he need make as the rest of the show was the same. The Siebel Bros. World's Greatest Dog & Pony Shows, of Watertown, Wisconsin, went from wagons to rails in 1905. In 1906 the show was offered for rent. A Seibel ad appeared in the September 25, 1906 issue of the *Billboard*. The inventory of the show details the quantity of show equipment that could be loaded on two cars. The ad listed: two passenger coaches, six wheel trucks, steel tired; marquee; fifty foot menagerie tent with one thirty foot middle; eighty foot big top with a forty and a thirty middle; dressing room; flags; banners and all show property; forty ponies; one mule; a sixteen pony drill; a well trained troupe of dogs; two large horses; two gilly wagons; two cages of monkeys; knock down band wagon for twelve people; lead buggy; other wagons for parade and show; seven lengths of reserve seats and seventeen lengths of blues. The ad stated, "This is conceded by all showmen who have seen it to be the most complete two car show ever loaded."

By 1911 the country was loaded with two and three car



The Black Hills Wild West moved on two cars in 1914. It was typical of the shows of the period.

circuses, many of them playing the year around without closing. The winter tours were naturally through the South. The February 11, 1911 *Billboard* carried an article noting that Texas was getting its share of tent shows, with thirty-two two and three car shows in the state at the time. Some were minstrel or Uncle Tom's Cabin outfits, but most were circuses.

The late CHS member Frank M. Ferrell viewed his first three car circus in 1911. It was the Masterson's Railroad Shows, which he later described as an exhibition of quality, distinction and originality. The show, owned by Harry Topping, was advertised as Masterson's Reproduction of Dan Rice. It opened the 1911 season in Charleston, West Virginia. The circus used a combination car

The Mollie Bailey show traveled on two cars for many years. This view of the band and one of the cars was taken in 1913.



with a stateroom on one end, berths for the show officials in the center and a dining and kitchen area on the other end. The second car was a sleeper for the performers and band, with one end partitioned off for the bosses.

The third car was a sixty foot baggage unit in which all of the equipment, horses, dogs and ponies were carried. Masterson's was framed in Charleston and one of the youngsters on the show when it opened was the late John W. Arter, later a president of the Circus Fans of America.

A description of all of the equipment that could be loaded into a baggage car appeared in the *Billboard* of August 21, 1913. The article was about the Jones Bros. New Empire Shows that was playing Western Canada on its way to Washington and California. It read, "As is to be expected with experienced showmen, the Jones Bros. understand the packing away of a maximum of stuff in a minimum of space, and to watch the unloading of their seventy-four foot baggage car is an experience. There are three cross car dens, one lion cage of considerable size, an elephant, a camel, three head of working stock, fifteen ponies, a bear, four goats, twelve goats, an eighty foot round top with two thirty foot middles, a fifty by eighty foot side show top, a thirty by fifty foot dressing top, together with all of equip-

ment necessary. The second car is a sixty-six foot Pullman sleeper in which some twenty-four of the twenty-eight people are very comfortably cared for. No parade is given other than a band of ten pieces on foot. With such an outfit, carried at so low a cost, it can be

easily understood that it must be a money maker. Elmer H. Jones is personally in charge."

The January 3, 1914 *Billboard* carried a couple of two car show articles. Lawrence DeRue wrote of his visit to the J. H. Eschman European Circus in a small town in Louisiana. He reported that the show carried a fine spread of canvas, consisting of the main circus tent, a side show with a full set of banners, two concession tents and an uptown wagon. At noon the band of twelve pieces, dressed in splashy uniforms, appeared on the public square and played six numbers. The band returned to the lot followed by a large crowd, where a number of free attractions were given. The ticket price was fifty cents, with extra for reserved seats. The feature of the show was Little Nero, the super educated baby elephant. DeRue reported that after the performance the Mayor and other city officials entered the ring and announced that, "We have had many circuses in the place, and some big ones, too, but none pleased our people like this one."

Another article told of the Providence, Rhode Island, winter quarters of the LeClair, Webber and Hughes Circus. George A. Manchester, owner of the property, was also the proprietor of the circus. There were sixteen stalls in a new ring barn. The show was to open the season on three sixty foot cars and would carry a ten cage menagerie, a combination band and ticket wagon, twenty-six to thirty ponies, fifty dogs, five working monkeys and eight draft horses. The practically new canvas consisted of a seventy foot round top with two forty foot middles, a sixty foot menagerie top with two thirties, a fifty foot dressing tent, a fifty foot side show tent with a forty foot middle and a twenty by thirty foot dining tent. The show would carry twenty lengths of blues and ten lengths of reserves. Every seat, jack, stringer, pole and stake was made from trees cut on the farm. The show was to play twenty-two weeks of three day stands under the auspices of Chambers of Commerce. This show toured in 1914 and 1915.

The June 27, 1914 *Billboard* also contained two articles about baggage car shows. One told of the Kelly Bros. Greater Shows opening in Petersburg,

Illinois, on May 2. It stated that the outfit was on two of the finest cars on the road. The side show, with a front of banners, featured a snake charmer, trained monkeys, a small horse, a magician, Punch and Judy, a mind reader and a ventriloquist. The big show performance consisted of clown songs, comedy break-a-way ladders, perch act, double traps, trained ponies, clown number, trained monkeys and dogs, clowns, wire walkers, jargo clown number, airship pony, trick horse, Roman ladders, clown walk-a-round, contortionist, monkey and dog race and a dog revolving table. The band had ten pieces. Another article told of the Rentz Bros. Circus that was playing in the area around Pittsburgh for two weeks.

A May 1914 issue of the showman's Bible reported on the Stone & Murray show. The story said the show had opened the season in Hartford, North Carolina, and that business had been above expectations in spite of some very bad weather the first few weeks. This organization was owned by the Jones Bros., of the Jones Bros. and Wilson Circus, with Aleck C. Jones, the youngest brother, as manager. The show was transported on two seventy foot cars and carried four head of baggage stock, twelve ponies and two mules. The circus used a ninety foot big top with two forties, the side show was a fifty with two twenties. Five cages of animals were carried, as well as a small elephant, a camel, eight ponies, a January mule and a troupe of dogs. The performance was presented in one ring and a stage. A cabaret was given rather than a concert. It featured the Lenhardts in tango dancing. The twenty numbers listed in the show included swinging ladders, performing monkeys, Roman rings, cannonball juggling, bounding rope, juggling on rolling globes and a clown police patrol wagon act.

Another article in the same issue advised that the J. H. Eschman European Circus had returned from a trip to the Bahama Islands.



The top half of the cover of a courier used by Rentz Bros. Great Fashion Plate Shows that toured on two cars in 1914.

In 1916 a three car show was outfitted in Chicago Heights, Illinois. It was the Cole and Bradford Circus, owned by Bradford Coleman, who had been a ticket seller and office handy man for Otto Ringling on the Barnum & Bailey show from 1908 to 1910. The show used a sixty foot big top with two forties, presenting the standard ring and stage. At peak capacity the tent could hold 2,000 people.

The menagerie contained lions, a zebra, a camel, a sacred cow, a cage of monkeys and an elephant leased from George "Popcorn" Hall. The big show band had ten pieces and there was a black band in the side show. On the

CHS past President Bette Leonard is shown with a posing statue horse on Elmer Jones' Cooper Bros. in 1917.



midway was a pit show with a big snake and a chicken that was ballyhooed to be fed to the snake. The side show featured, of all things, Art Lund's dancing duck. The duck was placed on a metal table top that was rigged like a hot plate. The Cole and Bradford show used a sleeper and two tunnel cars and carried around forty people. The wagons included four small cages, three light tableaux used in the parade and for lighting equipment, one wardrobe wagon and one knock down gilly wagon. The show lasted only one

season.

In 1918 Elmer H. Jones used the Hugo Bros. title which opened March 25 in Foreman, Arkansas. It moved on a sleeper and a ninety foot balloon top baggage car, much like the car on the Sparks show. One end of the sleeper contained two staterooms and a wash room. The other end had a kitchen, with the berths in the center were for the staff, performers and band. In the morning the berths were folded up and tables were set up for breakfast. The working men slept in a hidden loft in the baggage car. The baggage car carried a sixty foot big top with two forties, a side show and dressing tents, seats and all other equipment. The animals on the show included a mule, an elephant, a camel, five dogs, five goats, leaping greyhounds, two monkeys and a large mandrill. An air calliope was mounted on a Ford Model T car, which was used as a downtown bally. Charles H. Blaum, the bandleader on the show, stated in later years that the show looked like a fifteen car circus on the lot.

William "High Grass" Campbell operated the Col. George W. Hall Show, out of Evansville, Wisconsin, in 1919. This two car unit used the usual big top format of a ring and a stage. The performance included statues, rings and cradle, riding dogs, a trick pony, juggling, a waltzing mule and pony, acrobatic dogs, double traps, a performing elephant presented

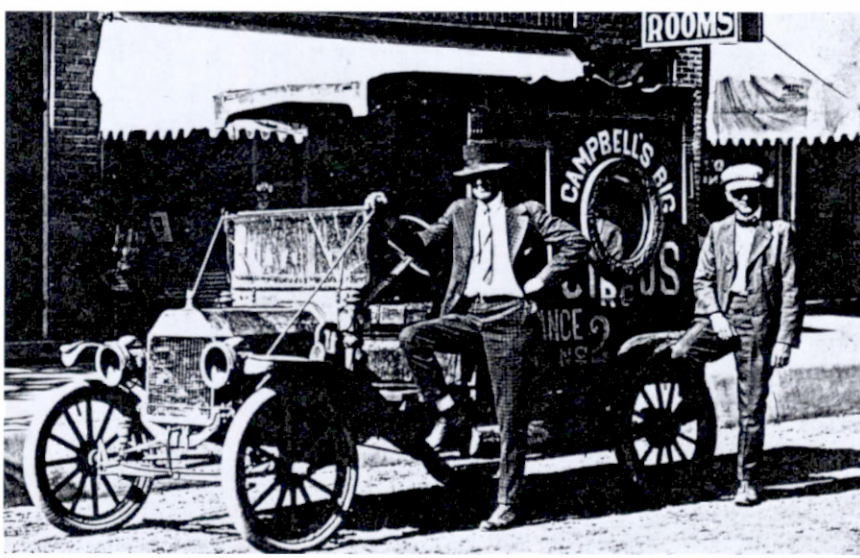
by Emery Stiles, and a perch act in its twenty-three numbers. Frank Hill worked most of the animals. The show had a twenty piece band. Clarence Askings was the general agent. The Col. Hall show closed the 1919 season in November and went into quarters in North Little Rock, Arkansas. Campbell announced that when he opened next year he would have a new

eighty foot all steel baggage car and a new Pullman with a Delco light plant, steam heat and running water in the staterooms. Campbell changed the title of his show to Campbell Bros. Wild Animal Shows for the 1920 and 1921 seasons. The show was sold to J. H. "Doc" Barry, who operated it in 1922 and 1923.

William P. "Low Grass" Campbell, sometimes called "Wisconsin Bill," toured the Campbell Circus on two cars in 1917 and 1918. This show traveled on a sixty-four foot baggage car and a seventy-two foot combination sleeper-dining car. Ford autos were used on the advance. This performance had six Shetland ponies, three high school horses, five goats and two posing horses. Campbell sold his show to Floyd and Howard King and it became the Great Sanger Show in 1919.

CHS past president Bette Leonard was with the Christy Hippodrome Shows in 1919. The show opened in Rosenberg, Texas, on March 1 and closed in Freeport, Texas, on December 29. The tour included a number of stands in western Canada, where many two car circuses played. Everett James, father of well known band leader Harry James, led the band of ten pieces. Mrs. James did an iron jaw act. There were eight ponies and one horse on the Christy show that year.

John T. Backman and Al Tinsch toured the Backman-Tinsch two car show in 1919 and 1920. This show used an eighty foot baggage car and a sleeper-dining car. The performance featured Capt. Roy Houzer and five lions,



A Model T Ford truck served as the advance car on the "High Grass" Campbell show in 1918. Circus World Museum Collection.

the Flying Clarks, Charles Dennison's performing monkeys and Mae Bell and her doves. The concert consisted of a glee club and a comedy skit. In 1921 Backman and Tinsch added equipment and W. F. "Doc" Palmer as a partner and took the fifteen car Palmer Bros. Circus on the road.

In 1920 Floyd and Howard King toured their Great Sanger show for the second season on two cars. The show used a seventy foot top with one forty and two twenties. The Sanger side show top was a fifty with two twenties.

Other two and three car shows on the road in 1920 included Elmer Jones' Cole Bros; Jones' Rice Bros., managed by brother Aleck; LaMont Bros.; Rose Kilian; Christy Bros.; Campbell Bros.; Arps; Lombard and Hathaway; and Rhoda Royal.

After 1920 the baggage car operas began to fade away. As roads were built to the out of the way small towns in the coal fields of Kentucky, West Virginia, Tennessee and Virginia, railroad passenger service was cut back. Increased rail charges together with the lack of passenger service reduced the financial return of the little shows. Only a few of the old traditional operators stayed with it.

Elmer Jones toured five two car shows in 1921: the Cole Bros. and Wheeler Bros. circuses, two colored minstrel

shows and Mason's Uncle Tom's Cabin. The Wheeler show opened in Fountain Inn, South Carolina, on April 2 and the Cole show opened April 2 in Greer, South Carolina. Elmer managed the Cole unit and brother Frank handled the Wheeler trick. Alex Sokolove was a trusted office man who worked for Jones from 1917 to 1930. Sokolove was usually on the show not managed by Elmer

himself. He watched the money carefully but had no interest in managing a circus, so Jones always had a brother on his other circus to get it up and down. Jones also used the Cooper Bros. and Rice Bros. titles during the 1921 season, but did not have four circuses outfits on the road. It is difficult to know how many actual circuses Jones had on the road in a given year since he changed titles on the same equipment frequently.

At the end of the 1921 season even Elmer Jones knew it was time to retrench. In the fall of that year he ran an ad in the *Billboard* offering several two car shows for sale. The ad stated they were complete outfits and could be used for dramatic or circus use. He also offered a complete two car Uncle Tom's Cabin show. He must have sold all three shows as he operated only two circuses thereafter.

From 1922 to 1925 he used the Cole Bros. and Cooper Bros. titles on his two car shows. The same titles were used in 1924 and 1925. Jones used the best equipment from both shows in 1926 and took out only one show on three cars using the Cooper title. The Cooper name was used again in 1927, but was changed to Cole & Rogers for the 1928, 1929 and 1930 seasons.

CHS member Joe Fleming of Trenton, Nebraska, enjoyed the visit of the Cole & Rogers Circus in his home town in 1928 and wrote about the show as follows, "The cages were small and not fancy. There were four head of baggage stock, all white and not too big. The



bandwagon was a nice little 'cut out' shell was pulled by four grays in the parade. Dominic Feranti had a swell nine piece band. The parade was ended up with a Model T Ford carrying a calliope and a clown driving a very small white mule hitched to a January cart. There were around a half a dozen head of saddle horses, which were used in the wild west, menage and garland entry numbers, and a nice bunch of ponies. The performance was good and was in two rings. The show loaded into two baggage cars. The cages and other wagons were loaded in the ends of the cars on runs same as a flat car show. They used a set of running gears (gilly wagon) to haul the canvas, poles and other equipment. These running gears were the last things to be loaded. It looked like there was no room left in the cars, but the running gears were taken apart and the various pieces were crammed in.

"I once saw the Elmer Jones Cooper Bros., a three car show, set up on a muddy lot and it was a real sight to me, as a horse lover, to watch the Shetland pony teams pulling those little wagons onto the lot. They worked the ponies just like a big show worked horses."

Elmer Jones had second thoughts about going on the road in 1930. A letter written by Jones, using Cole & Rogers stationary, dated February 26, 1930, offered the complete Cole &

The gilly wagon of the the 1919 Rhoda Royal two car show is pictured in front of the cars.

Rogers show for sale. It is not known to whom the letter was written. The letter reads as follows, "Charles Sparks offered me \$30,000 for the show last spring and I would not consider it. I have never had a losing season with this show. I am wintering in Minneapolis, so that I can jump right into Canada as soon as I open. I guess you have an idea what it costs to frame a show and if one was to frame a show like this it would cost over \$40,000. I have some paper on hand and the printing house has a full line of swell paper on the shelf. My reason for selling out



The two cars of the Christy Hippodrome Shows are shown in a 1919 photo. The open door of the tunnel car can be seen at the far left.

is that I am interested in the oil business here (Warren, Pa.) and also in other businesses, besides my two children are now of school age and will have to put them in school.

"I ask \$25,000 for the show complete

and this is a money making business as I have made plenty with it. I was out only 26 weeks last season, 9 weeks in the states that the joints do practically nothing, but cleared \$10,000 with the joints in 16 weeks in Canada. Several years ago I played eastern Canada and Done Big Business. I had record breaking business on the Checutame Branch also on the Gaspé Branch. I believe this show could go up there now and get some nice big business as I intend to quit the business. You should buy from me, I will give you all the good spots in western Canada, I have also been east as far as Sidney and Glace Bay, but that was with a 2 car show without a parade. I have a good winter quarters and siding at 1228 Second Street in South Minneapolis. If interested let me hear from you soon."

The complete inventory of the show was listed as follows:

Two 80 foot long Baggage cars, in good condition, need no repairs.

One 80 foot long sleeper.

One 80 foot top with two 40 foot middle pieces in good condition.

One 50 by 100 side show top, new last June with new proscenium and side show stage covers.

One 30 by 50 Pad Room and horse and pony tent, new last year.

One 20 by 30 foot pit show top, new last year.

One 10 by 16 candy stand top.

One 12 by 12 Hoopla top.

One 10 by 10 grease joint top. Stakes and poles complete with all tents.

Three gilly wagons.

One light plant wagon, contains two K. W. Universal light plants.

One candy stand tableau wagon.

Six cages.

One Bandwagon.

One January Mule clown cart.

One Pneumatic calliope mounted in Ford Truck, rear end arranged as ticket wagon.

16 lengths blue seats.

8 lengths Turtle Back reserve seats.

One 3 and 1/2 high net, goes all the way around inside and fastens on quarter poles, used on account of wild west concert.

Two Swell performing elephants weight 4900 and 5900 lbs. each.

Two camels.



Four lions.
Three baby lions, six months old.
One Leopard.
One Puma.
Eight Monkeys.
One South American porcupine.
Thirteen horses.
Twenty-one Shetland ponies.
One small white unridable mule, does January act.

One small pony used in pit show as the smallest horse in the world.

Harness and saddles for all stock for parade, trappings and wardrobe.

Two elephant act.

Two Menage horse act.

Eight pony drill.

Three pony trick act.

January act.

Unridable mule act.

Two riding dogs and two riding monks, one act.

Jones continued, "the sleeper has 10 uppers and 10 lowers, one stateroom for four people, one private stateroom and office combined consists of safe, rolltop desk, wash stand, flush toilet, and box spring bed with lockers underneath the bed, kitchen 14 feet long has berths in it for the cooks and dishwasher, also arranged to feed 12 working men at a time, has range with hot water tank, big ice box in vestibule and big locker on opposite vestibule for provisions. All cars have large cellars (possum bellies) underneath to carry advertising, candy stand stock and dogs.

Jones also stated, "I have the best small show agent in the business, who knows the territory and the spots that the show will get money. I have all of the

This photo was taken at the closing stand of the Campbell Bros, two car show in Lancaster, California in November 1920. Emery Stiles is shown with the elephant.

performers engaged. One team doing five acts, \$40. One team doing three acts, \$40. One team doing 5 acts, \$40. One performer does 3 acts, including acrobatic jumps over 4 big horses and 3 ponies, seven acts in all, \$20. Clowns \$18 each, bandleader, \$21, all other musicians, \$18. You can't beat that for framing the show cheap. I have not engaged a trainer yet, but have several on the string."

This prospective buyer did not take the show as Elmer H. Jones made his final tour with this three car show in 1930. Bette Leonard and her late hus-

The band of the Backman-Tinsch 1920 show posed in front of one of the cars.



band Fred Leonard wrote an article about the show that appeared in the April 1950 issue of the *Bandwagon*. He told of the loading of the baggage cars as follows, "In one end of one car was loaded the two elephants and two camels next to the center side door. This was made like a box stall with a door in the center. Then came the wild west horses and two saddle horses with another partition across the car, then the work horses and a partition. A small space was used to load props. The big top, stakes, poles and seats were loaded last next to the end door.

"The second baggage car had doors on both ends, as well as on each side. The cages, bandwagon and light plant were placed in one end, with the side show canvas and equipment. The ponies were loaded at the other end. The entire outfit was gillied to and from the lot using three knock down wagons (running gear only with planks.) Trunks were loaded in the bandwagon. The first load to the lot was the big top canvas, poles and stakes. The next load was the prop boxes, followed by the side show and seats. Many times on a wet night the canvas was too bulky with moisture to be loaded into the car. When that happened the elephants would be unloaded and made to stomp on the bundles to squeeze out as much water as possible. The canvas was then put in the car and the elephants pushed the doors shut."

Elmer H. Jones like other small car showmen saw the decline of the two and three car shows in the 1920s. In 1921

he had toured five of the little shows, by 1930 he had one. Campbell Bros., under the ownership of "Doc" Berry, held on through the 1923 season. The Campbell Circus, owned by William "High Grass" Campbell, closed after the 1923 season. Cowboy showman Milt Hinkle talked George Christy into tak-

ing out the Texas Ranch Wild West on two cars in 1925. It lasted only one year. The last new three car show to take to the road was the Christ & Hough Circus in 1926. It too lasted only one summer.

The exception in the early 1920s was the show operated by Floyd and Howard King. Starting on two cars in 1919, it increased in size to five cars by 1924, its last year as a baggage car enterprise.

Elmer Jones disposed of the three car Cole & Rogers show following the 1930 tour. The only equipment from the show that can be traced is the bandwagon and two cages. James Schonblom, of Bradford, Pennsylvania, in a March 3, 1986 letter tells about the Cole & Rogers wagons as follows: "I can remember very well when the wagons came to Bradford around 1930. Art Haggerty, long since deceased, was traveling on the train to Buffalo when he spotted the wagons sitting in a field near Springville, N. Y. He went back there and bought the two small cage wagons and the bandwagon for the McKean County Shrine Club. They were used in cermonials of the Shrine for several years and they still use one of the cages for that purpose to this day. Candidates pull it."

"In February of 1937, as a publicity stunt, the Circus Saints and Sinners Lillian Leitzel tent bought the Mighty Watson Shows from the Shrine for a mythical \$1,000,000. Both organizations used the wagons throughout the years as occasions arose. I think the

This interesting photo shows the large end doors of the tunnel car on Cooper Bros. in 1923. Jim Dunwoody collection.



The 1921 Wheeler Bros. Circus was operated by Elmer Jones and Al F. Wheeler.

last time they were horse drawn in a parade was at the national convention of the Saints and Sinners in Bradford the summer of 1949. In the 1960s, the barn where we housed the wagons was lost to us and the wagons were moved out to Bryner's barn in Custer City. One cage and the bandwagon are still there but in horrible unusable condition. The other cage is kept downtown and available for display mostly."

A truck show using the Cole & Rogers title toured in the United States in 1934, but there were no *Billboard* references to Jones being connected with the show. The booklet *As Told on a Sunday Run*, published by Harry Bowman, states that Jones operated the Cole & Rogers show on a couple of cars in Canada in 1934. Other authors picked up this misinformation, and embellished the story by saying that the rail cars were "bad ordered" (pulled out of service) by the railroad when the show came out of Canada into New York state. The show was then supposedly converted to trucks.

Little is known about about Elmer

Jones activities until 1936, when he tried one more time, framing a two car show called Cooper Bros. Tapping brother Richard for the money to take this one on the road. The first word of the 1936 show appeared

in a *Billboard* ad that appeared in the March 28 issue, which read, "Wanted for small railroad show to open May 25, first stand in Canada. Want useful circus performers, clowns and musicians for ten piece band. Also want sleeper, light plants, a 70 or 80 foot big top with two middles." A news story appeared in an April issue. Titled "Rail Show For Jones," the article stated that it was reported that Elmer H. Jones was buying all kinds of circus property, elephants and other animals. It was not yet decided how many cars would be used. Baggage and sleeping cars were being whipped into shape by experienced bosses. D. C. Hawn, who was general agent for Cole & Rogers, had been signed to pilot the show. On May 9 an ad appeared for Cooper Bros. Railroad Circus wanting a boss canvasman and Oriental dancers. It advised that the show would open May 25.

An unpublished manuscript in the files of the Circus World Museum provides extensive information on the framing and the touring of the Cooper Bros. Circus in 1936. It was written by Todd Davenport, who had traveled with the show and made day to day notes. Much of the information regarding the 1936 show that follows is from the Davenport document.

It took two weeks of hard work to frame the Cooper show in North Warren, Pennsylvania. The two cars were spotted on a siding about one and a half blocks from Richard Jones' barn. Some of the work was done in the barn and some on the siding.

When Davenport arrived Blonda and Peggy Ward, and Texas Joe and Marion Clarke were the only ones there. They were living in an old carnie day coach. There was a kitchen in one end with a wood burning stove. The middle section contained coach seats and one end had



The coach and tunnel car of the Elmer Jones Cole Bros. Circus are pictured during the 1924 season. A baggage team and a gilly wagon are on the far right.

rest rooms and two state rooms. The car was in very poor shape, the roof leaked and the paint was flaking off. On each side of the car "JS" was painted in red letters. Davenport thought perhaps it had at one time been on the Johnnie J. Jones carnival, but no one knew for sure where the car had come from.

Davenport and "Little Red" Espey were given the job of painting the car green on the outside, and applying tar to the roof. They ripped out the seats and tossed them along the right away. Texas Joe changed the interior into a living coach. Joe was a cabinet maker by trade and had the proper tools. A new stove arrived and was installed.

Jones spent some money on knotty pine paneling for the coach. The car had a cement floor and linoleum was laid down. The kitchen was in the front of the car, and contained the stove, a work table and a cooler. Pullman style berths were built for the cook and his wife. On the other side of the aisle were two booths that held eight people at a time; this is where the working boys ate. A partition beyond this opened into four more booths that held sixteen people, over head were additional Pullman style berths for the band.

Another partition opened into a section holding permanent two high berths. The other end of the car contained a stateroom for the Jones family and the office. Platforms on either end contained 55 gallon drums for water. A light plant was installed in one of the possum bellies, and the car was wired for electricity, but it wasn't used as the exhaust would come up into the car, so light was provided by oil lanterns.

Davenport related that some humorous incidents which occurred during the two weeks, but not to Elmer Jones, who was trying to frame the show with a small bankroll. Jones had purchased a big top for \$200. He had a middle section

left from the Cole & Rogers 1934 show. (This is the first reference to Jones being connected with the 1934 truck show.) The middle section had Cole & Rogers painted on the eaves. The canvas came into the depot and it was brought to the barn and unrolled in the side yard. Elmer and brothers Dick and Aleck were upset when when it was discovered to be in bad shape.

The canvas was sewed in the yard by day and by night using lights from the barn. Next came a debate about the center poles. Aleck had a farm not far away with some straight pines on it. Dick wanted to send a couple of boys up to cut four poles out and peel them, but Elmer argued that they would be sticky all season so he bought some oil well casing pipe and it was used. There was only enough for three poles, so two middle sections were laced together. This proved to be a bad move as the huge center piece did a lot of bucking and jumping in a bad blow during the season. Jones bought two World War I surplus light plants.

Davenport stated that Elmer Jones had been in partnership with a wild west showman in 1931. The show had folded in Springville, New York and the equipment had been in storage there. The show equipment in Springville was probably what was left from the 1930 show, as that is the location where the Bradford people found the wagons. Dick Jones owned a livery stable and had a large truck to haul horses. This truck was sent to Springville to pick up the equipment that included a light plant wagon. Inside the box were two old plants there were badly rusted. The wag-

on was unloaded in the barn yard and it collapsed. The wheels, pole and running gear were all that was left. A new box was built for the wagon and the newly purchased light plants were installed.

The show was hard put to find a canvas boss. Elmer had wired Blackie Moore thirty dollars to come on. He never showed, so Elmer wired twenty dollars to Blackie Moorhead, but he didn't arrive either. Davenport stated that he was on the Shannon show with Moorhead the following season and he "laughed about how he had conned ole Elmer out of a double G."

Willie Carter, a black man with the show, had been with Elmer since he was a youngster and he was capable of handling the canvas job. But white men at that time would not take orders from a black man. James "Scratchy" Knipsicker came in. He had been the canvas boss on the Sylvan-Drew show, so Elmer gave him the job.

Davenport had experience working in a blacksmith shop in Oil City so he set up a forge and anvil to get the iron stakes ready for the session. After the stakes were heated the ends were pounded to a point. But the helper tossed the completed stakes on the ground without dipping them. Jones was never told of this omission, and the stakes turned out to be useless on the road.

The work of framing the show was completed on Saturday May 16 and it was loaded into the cars for the morning passenger train to pick it up for the run to Dunkirk.

The Cooper Bros. Circus moved on a seventy foot coach and an eighty foot tunnel car. The tunnel car carried all of the equipment and the animals. There were doors on one end that opened for the runs used to unload the light plant. It was the only wagon that was not knocked down. It was the first thing unloaded and the last loaded at night. There were two doors on each side. The space between the end doors and the first set of side doors was allotted for the equipment. The seats were piled on each side and the canvas, poles and stakes were tossed in the middle, leaving room for the light plant wagon. Space between the two sets of side doors was used for the side show and

the props; a wooden fence separated the two departments. Overhead was a bin to store the advance paper. Each department had their own door to load and unload. Everything possible was done to avoid confusion. Each department paid strict attention to their area.

The animals were housed in the other end of the car. The show carried four head of baggage stock, two riding horses, one mule, one donkey, six ponies, fifteen dogs and a bear. Hammocks were installed over the livestock for some of the working men; others flopped on the canvas at night. The show was loaded by oil lantern lights.

Both cars were painted green with "C. B. S." lettered in yellow on side. The coach was No. 7 and the tunnel car was No. 11. There were possum bellies under both cars.

The big top was carried on two Kramer Co. wagons that were new at the start of the season. They had been purchased for \$85 each from the Kramer Wagon Co. in Oil City. They were well built but very heavy. The wagons consisted of the running gears, reaches, tongues and bolsters. The tent poles were laid across the bolsters to form a bed and the stakes and canvas were placed on the poles. These typical gilly wagons were taken apart each night and placed in the car.

The side show had an older Kramer wagon and the same system was used. Another old Kramer wagon was used for the prop department. The light plant was the only one on the show that looked like a circus wagon. It was a 14 foot Kramer with a box and a metal roof. The side panels swung up and a compartment was used to store wiring and bulbs. It was painted red, the roof silver and the running gears and tongue bright yellow.

The baggage horses came from the Richard Jones farm. The two work teams were Percharons, a pair of blacks and a pair of iron grays.

Davenport understood that Jones was going to move the show on thirty-five passenger tickets. Most ticket agents and conductors accepted this, but once in a while a railroad man would get fussy and count heads and raise cane about the extra people being on the two cars.

There was a hot box on the tunnel car

on the way to Dunkirk, but repairs were made there and the show moved on to Buffalo and the main rail line to Niagara Falls. The show cleared the border except for Capt. Irwin's pig that was sent back to his quarters in Paxing, Pennsylvania.

The show arrived in Grimsby, Ontario, in late afternoon. No one knew the title until they saw the paper posted in that city. The show moved on the lot



The two tunnel cars of the 1925 Cooper Bros. show are being unloaded with the coach at far left. A team of horses and a gilly wagon are between the cars. Jim Dunwoody collection.

and everything went smoothly until they tried to drive the stakes. Some bent, some split. Working all night the stakes were reworked so they could be used. Texas Joe had made the mud blocks for the pipe center poles out of soft wood and they split when the weight of the poles and canvas came down on them. The seating was blues on the ends and red star backs for the reserves.

The weather was good at the Monday opening and the show did good business. The older troupers on the show went around shaking their heads saying that it would not last. Late that night it started to rain and it continued through the next morning. The show laid over in the Toronto rail yards and breakfast was served there. The two cars were hooked up to a local passenger train and moved to Gravenhurst about a hundred miles north of Toronto. Good business was done there also in spite of the continuing rain.

The third stand was in Bracebridge

and the rain continued, and being further north it was cold. Five of the black workingmen blew there. The matinee was missed and business was poor.

Whitie Chapman was the fixer and he was kept busy on a gift show like Cooper Bros. Davenport reported that side show had three games, plus the G. Wheel, a Big Tom and a jingle board on the midway. The Big Tom left quarters with twelve Cupie Dolls and came

back with twelve. The inside grifters worked what were high stakes for that time, \$40 and up. There was one man on the train that Davenport couldn't figure out. He would be seen each morning walking into town with a brief case, but never showed up on the lot. He had some kind of a uptown racket.

The side show did have a few attractions. Prof George Oram King and his wife Nellie were old time troupers. He had a sword box and did Punch and Judy. Nellie, who was well known in prior years as a steam calliope player on the Mighty Haag show, played a number of instruments, some of which she invented herself. Alisha Barth was the girl in the sword box, and she and her sister Virginia were the cooch dancers in the annex. There was no side show band so Nellie played the trumpet and kicked a drum with her foot for the dancers' motivation. A large bear was staked out in front of the side show and was featured during the bally openings.

The show moved to the traditional two car show territory in Western Canada. Some long runs were made and this created problems in feeding the personnel. There was no connection between the two cars. When the show made long jumps the working men would drop out

the door of the tunnel car and run and catch the coach where the kitchen was. After eating if the train didn't stop they would walk across the couplings and mount the ladder and walk along the cat walk on top of the tunnel car and drop down and slid in the side doors. Elmer thought this was a very dangerous activity and was against it.

On the morning of July 31 the show awoke in Dawson Creek, the end of the rails. This was the turn-around point and the show headed back east.

The last week of August the show was in Totzke for a matinee and then jumped fifty miles to Young for the night show and were due to pull out of there at 11:45 pm. The crew worked together and all connections were made. It was rare for a show to play two towns in a single day, but it had been done on the Christy show in prior years.

In Humbolt the siding was lined with grain elevators with the track ending just past them. The coach was spotted on this extension as the grain elevator people were concerned about sparks from the stove's chimney. The tunnel car was spotted near the end of the switch track. The siding had a slight downgrade. Some of the working men got the idea of connecting the two cars together. After supper some of the men released the brakes on the coach and got it rolling, pushing by manpower. It started to roll and they all jumped aboard. It picked up speed and ran out of control hitting the tunnel car. It started rolling and in turn both cars slammed into a string of box cars which jumped the track at the closed switch, leaving box cars scattered along the main line. The No. 7 car stopped just short of the switch. This caused no end of trouble. A big hook crane engine had to be used to set things right. Jones was so mad he couldn't even talk. Somehow the show squared it and moved on.

Davenport tells of the performance of the Cooper show with a listing of the acts. Billie Lerch (who was a CHS member in his old age) did a tumbling table

act. Barney Aronson had a unique wire balancing act, balancing himself on a chair and for a finish did a hand stand from the chair back. His feet almost brushed the canvas as he did this. The Barth Family had an outstanding tumbling act, working on a forty foot pad. The father Jules did a comic knock about on a small table; Mother Jo worked a single trapeze and was good at doing toe catches. Charlotte Jones, Elmer's daughter, made her debut in show business on a swinging ladder.

Billy Grant did contortion on Roman rings, balancing a glass of water. Jennie and Billy Lerch also did a Roman ring act and he worked in several of the clown numbers. Billie also went up town with the band playing a drum. He was the banner painter and did the side show bally. Lerch was a very handy employee of the show.

Capt. Irwin had the animal acts. He had fifteen assorted dogs. Irwin had a grey rosinback horse and one of the dogs would do a somersault on horseback. He also had a pick out pony act and presented leaping greyhounds. Other performer shook their heads at Irwin's announcement that his act had performed before the "crowned heads of the United States."

Wild west acts were presented as an

the performance. Frank P. Meister had a ten piece band.

Davenport reported that the show was dragged out with a candy pitch, banner and concert announcements and that performance didn't really have a beginning or an ending.

Brother Richard was assistant manager and brother Aleck had the candy stands with peanuts and soft drinks. Alex Sokolove and Mrs. Elmer Jones had a concessions on the midway. Mrs. Jones had a "Big Tom" card game and Sokolove had a wheel, the same joint that he had always had on a Jones operation.

The show played a number of dates in Ontario and then moved into the territory where Jones had made money in past years. By July 1 the Cooper show was in Saskatchewan and it stayed in the prairie provinces through August.

The last week on the road the show made some money as the weather was nice. The matinees were light but the night shows were near capacity. The area between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie was a fruit belt and the show folks enjoyed the goodies. In Oakville the cars were spotted along side a fruit orchard. The ground was covered and all of the show bums were helped themselves until some men came out with shot guns and told them to get back over the fence.

Davenport reported that the show had a bad time getting across the border. The train stopped in Niagara Falls, Ontario where the crew thought it was going to be a short session with the customs officials and that they would move right on into Buffalo. But the officer in charge told the railroad to put the cars on a siding

as "he was going to through this crummy pile of junk with a fine tooth comb." He started in rough shod, telling the show crew that they had to unload it. They refused until the fixer came by and ordered the unloading. The fixer told the inspector his boys would unload it, but the customs people would have to load it back up. It was not unloaded, but the customs man went through the cars and questioned every-



This big daub of splashy paper advertised the Elmer Jones Cooper show in the early 1920s.

after-show. Texas Joe and his wife did whips and ropes. Peggy Ward did Cosack riding and the clowns did an unridable mule number.

The big show had twelve numbers that included announcements. The usual elephant and camel were absent from

one. The Canadian customs finally let the show pass, and the two cars were attached to a slow freight to Buffalo.

When the show arrived in Buffalo everybody was hungry as it had been nearly twenty-four hours since they had been fed. The show was placed on a siding near the passenger station in Buffalo for a couple of hours and many people left. It was after dark when the show arrived in Dunkirk and the cars were shifted off the main line into the yards of the Central Valley Branch for the run down to Warren.

Davenport thought he would wake up in North Warren the next morning, but found the show was still on a track behind the Warren depot. About 8 a.m. Elmer and D. C. Hawn showed up and told the crew that they were to unload it there and the teams would haul the show up to the barn.

It was a five mile round trip and the teams made about three trips each. The light plant wagon and the seats were left in the car. The cars were to be hauled down to the Warren Tank Car Company yards at Starbrick. Texas Joe and his wife wound up living in them through the winter.

After it was all stowed away in the barn Dick Jones came out and paid the crew off, but they received no bonus. Elmer told them that he wanted them all back the following spring as he was figuring on a bigger show.

The route covered 10,000 miles. Bill Woodcock in 1962 wrote Bill Elbirn that the 1936 Cooper show was a financial failure.

Davenport's final comments were that Elmer Jones' big plans for the 1937 season were all for naught. He said that Jones was a compulsive gambler and he was dead broke by spring. He added that Jones could not have been a crooked one as he nearly always lost. Jones had a good reputation for paying his debts and previously he could always borrow money to put a show out. But by 1937, however, there was no one around to loan him a grubstake for another sea-



The bandwagon of the Cole & Rogers show made a downtown bally during the 1928 season. Joe Fleming photo.

son. Even his brother Dick had no interest in financing another circus.

Little is known about the disposition of the 1936 Cooper equipment. But Jones still owned some of the show property a year or so later. A letter in the Pfening Archives dated March 27, 1937, addressed to Jess Adkins, reads, "Kindly ship my calliope back to North Warren. I wrote you last fall but you failed to even answer my letter. So please give me some action this time."

In 1938 Adkins and his partner Zack Terrell were framing their number two unit, Robbins Bros., and were looking for additional rail cars. Jones thought this would be a good opportunity to unload his rail equipment. On January 18, 1938 Elmer Jones wrote to Floyd King in Rochester. This interesting letter reads, "Yes I will appreciate if you will ask Mr. Adkins if he can place me around the show, as I can fill most any position, from front door on."

"In regard to these cars I have here. The baggage car is a Warren Tank Car make. You know what they are like, blind ends, I doubt if it would be suitable for an advance car. The baggage car has double set of side doors and double end doors. It would make a good stock car or a swell elephant car. It has passenger trucks with steel wheels and steam line pipes, etc. to meet passenger train requirements.

"The sleeper is a swell car, steel sheeted, straight as can be, has all double windows and each window is screened with lift up screens. Floor is cement, six wheel trucks all wheels in good shape, standard heavy draft riggings. I bought the car gutted out and built in the berths and staterooms. There are 10 sections, 2 high berths and two staterooms, each having an upper and lower, toilet and wash sink in one end of the car. The other end has a 12 or 14 foot kitchen. Got all new mattresses and

bedding. The car was used only 17 weeks. I ask \$1,700 for each car. I never bought a car without looking at it first, so if you are interested better look them over."

It is not known if Jones sold the cars or not. He did, however, get a nibble from the Robbins show regarding a job.

In a March 18, 1938 letter Jones wrote to Jess Adkins, manager of Robbins Bros. Circus, as follows: "Your letter just received in regard to the 24 hour job. The salary Mr. King suggested was \$60 per week I pay own hotel bills. I spoke to King about a car and he didn't seem to think one should have a car ahead of a rail circus. But in my estimation one should have a car so that he could get around quick and be sure to get to the next town on time. I have a 1928 model Buick sedan in good shape but only get 12 miles to a gallon of gas. If you give me the job I will get a car that will save expense."

Jones wrote again on March 27 saying, "As I failed to get any reply to my last letter, I thought you might have been out of town. Kindly make me your best offer for the 24 hour job, me to furnish car and pay own hotel. My feet are commencing to itch and I want to get out on the road, an early reply will be appreciated." He was not with Robbins Bros. in 1938.

Elmer H. Jones was sixty-five years old in 1938, but the old warhorse was anxious to stay active in the business.

The last ditch try in 1936 was unsuccessful. The 1936 Cooper show was

the last for Elmer H. "Cap" Jones, and the grand finale for baggage car circuses. Jones spent his waning years in North Warren. Always a wagering man he was known around town as "Gambler Jones." He made an annual trip to Sarasota, Florida each winter. Elmer H. Jones died on April 8, 1962 at 83 years of age.

Over the years there have been a number of circuses that traveled on more than three but less than ten cars. These have not been covered as all of them used flat cars as well as sleepers and baggage cars. One example was the 1886 Holland & McMahon Circus. This show traveled in a box car, a stock car, a sleeper and two flats.

In addition to the two car minstrel and Uncle Tom's Cabin shows there were other circus related shows that used baggage cars. In 1892 the W. C. Coup Rolling Palace used four cars as a walk through exhibit.

In late 1945 Sam Houston purchased two sleepers and two stock cars that had been used on the Hagenbeck-Wallace and Arthur Bros. circuses. He converted the cars in the Los Angeles area and used them as an animal walk through show.

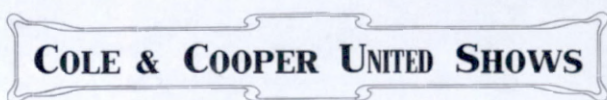
The last baggage car show in America was the British African Zoo Train, framed by Howard Y. Bary in Peru, Indiana, in 1951. He purchased two system baggage cars and an ex-Santa Fe diner. The cars were gutted and remodeled into an animal walk-through show. The show featured a young elephant, a pigmy hippo, a lion, a leopard, two chimps, birds and monkeys. The show was out again in 1952 and spent its entire final season of 1953 in Canada.

In an interesting twist, going back to the past, Ringling Bros. and Barnum &

Bailey returned to the rails in 1960, after three years on trucks. The show gutted four of the former ninety foot hospital cars, a.k.a. sleepers, that it had last used when the canvas circus closed for good in 1956. The cars were turned into open ended tunnel cars in which specially constructed small wagons were loaded, just as had been done on the two and three car shows of the past. Additional former sleepers were converted to elephant and horse cars. The big show carried its equipment in this manner until some years later when system piggyback flats were purchased.

After seeing the success of the Ringling innovation a couple of ice shows went to tunnel cars. The Holiday On Ice show bought three system baggage cars, shipped them to Venice, Florida, and hired some former Ringling people to adapt them as tunnel cars. Ice Capades followed in 1963, purchasing four baggage cars and reworking them in the same manner. Both ice shows used small wagons like the ones on the Ringling show. The ice shows moved their baggage cars using passenger tickets, as had been the case on the early two car circuses. The ice operations used system passenger cars. In due time the railroads changed the baggage tariff to per mile, per car rates. By 1977 limited rail passenger schedules caused both ice shows to give up their rail equipment and return to trucks.

Material used in this article has been collected over the last ten years and came from the Circus World Museum, John Polacsek, Fred Dahlinger, C. P. Fox, Tom Parkinson, L. A. Sadler, Bill Elbirt, Bill McCarthy, Jim Dunwoody, *Billboard* magazine and the Pfening Archives.



This rare group of Elmer H. Jones letterheads illustrate many of his early titles. The Montgomery Queen, Parks & Banks and Cole & Rogers were used in 1910. The King & Tucker was used in 1909. The Cole & Cooper was used in 1913. The Hugo title was used in 1915.

John Robinson Circus

By Joseph T. Bradbury

SEASON OF 1929 PART TWO

Two days in Kansas City, Mo., July 1-2, started off the tenth week of the season. Then the show began moving westward, going over into Kansas to play Emporia, Wichita, Salina, and Junction City. The word had been out for several weeks that the show planned to play further west than at any time since 1924. The usual eastward swing through Pennsylvania and New York state had been ruled out of the route.

The eleventh week began with John Robinson in Omaha, Nebraska for two days, July 8-9, and this was followed by additional dates in the state at Columbus, Grand Island, Kearney, and North Platte.

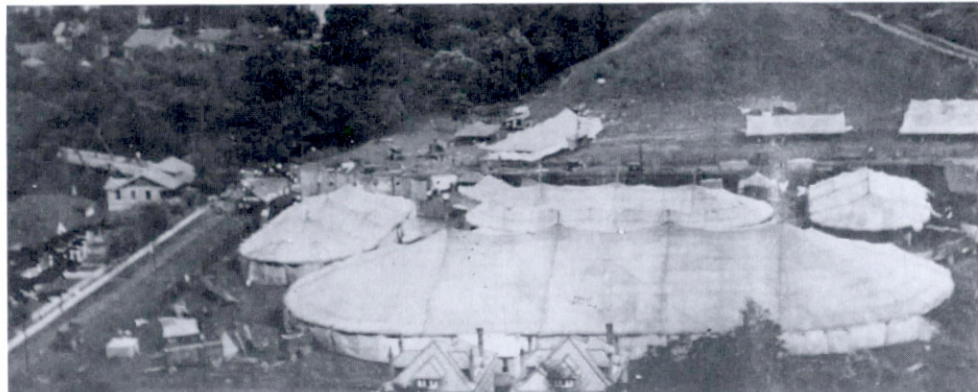
The July 13, 1929 *Billboard* contained a number of John Robinson stories. It was noted the show had been making some big jumps, but everything had been up and ready on time. Business had been good. While in Kansas City, the Shifters Club, the social club of staff and performers, had a big dance and luncheon in the ballroom of the Commonwealth Hotel. The side-show band furnished the music. Mr. Dories, manager of the hotel, who donated the hall, was made an honorary member of the club.

Mickey Blue, doing the tramp, and Harold Nicholson, the cop, were now working the Funny Ford and getting many laughs. Lawrence Anderson was working on the inside of the car since Ernie Wiswell was injured several weeks ago. Rudy Rudynoff bought another horse and was now breaking it. Another story in the same issue said that Barney Kerker had written in to state that George Davis, concession boss on John Robinson, had a hustling bunch of boys and had been having remarkably good business. Many comments had been heard on

the courtesy and cleanliness of the butchers in their white trousers and coats. Arthur Staman, bannerman, had been going good, scoring 33 ice cream and Coca Cola banners in 22 consecutive days. Kerker, the writer, and James Settler had been doing big business on the outside stands. The butchers had formed a baseball team and ordered uniforms.

A later *Billboard* account was a note from Warren T. Neihart, former agent of the F. J. Taylor Circus, which stated that John Robinson had capacity business at its two day stand in Omaha, Nebraska. He informed that the performance is a very good one.

A long Sunday run of 279 miles over



John Robinson Circus on the lot in Williamson, West Virginia, July 28, 1928. Circus World Museum Collection.

the Union Pacific moved the Robinson train from North Platte, Nebraska to Denver, Colorado where the show was billed to exhibit two days beginning Monday, July 15. The two day stand was the beginning of the twelfth week. Other dates in the week were at Pueblo and La Junta, then the show turned around and headed east into Kansas to play Dodge City and Great Bend.

Still moving eastward at a fast clip another Sunday run, this time 219 miles on the Santa Fe, took the show to Topeka, Kansas and performances on Monday, July 22. A trip into Missouri for three stands followed, Carrollton, Moberly, and Hannibal as the thirteenth week became history.

Some interesting show history was noted in a short article appearing in the July 13, 1929 *Billboard*. It said that the coming of the John Robinson Circus to Great Bend, Kansas, July 20, brought forth an item in the *Tribune* in that city by Charles Address, retired showman and resident of Great Bend. Among other things Address, said: "Back in the '60's and '70's the old road shows did all their own booking, all circuses traveled by wagon; the word vaudeville was unknown and what is now called vaudeville was the called varieties. Circuses in those early days showed only in the afternoon, as no way had been devised for lighting the tents at night. The old John Robinson Show was the first circus to give a night show and this was done by lighting the tents with pine knots burning around the ring bank and the tent soon

filled with smoke to such an extent that scarcely anything could be seen, nor could the audience sit in comfort. Soon afterward came the light candles, for this kind of performance, followed by the oil lamps, then gasoline, and now electric lighting systems which make the tents as light as day." (Author's note. Address, whose writings have provided research for historians on a number of subjects, is not correct in the time frames he mentioned but does give the sequence of tent illumination from the earliest days to the present.)

In the July 27, 1929 *Billboard* Rex



De Rosselli, press agent for John Robinson, wrote that on July 4 in her hometown of Wichita, Kansas, Mrs. Jess Adkins was entertained by her friends and in return gave a dinner and dance after the show. In Omaha the clowns went to the Marian Hospital for Crippled Children and gave a fine program. The *Omaha Bee* sponsored the entertainment and carried a front page story with cuts. Mlle Neiss, the fifth member of the Neiss troupe of highwire artistes, joined, coming directly from Paris and is doing the solo dances in the spec. J. O. Nance (Sippi), who for many years had the elephants with the Al G. Barnes Circus, joined as assistant to Larry Davis and was busy breaking a group of baby elephants. Whitey Cline, who had the elephants the first part of the season, was a visitor at Omaha. Whitey had been on the sick list for a long time but was rapidly recovering. Two camels were born recently. Three Iceland baby ponies also had been added to the kindergarten. The big hit of the menagerie was "Tiny Mite" the hippopotamus.

Much credit was due Blackie Diller. The draft horses were his pride and they attracted a lot of attention and received many flattering press stories on their wonderful condition.

A couple of weeks later it was reported that Mlle Neiss, who was mentioned

John Robinson loaded flat cars, season of 1928. This was the first season for the newly built Mt. Vernon flats. Note the giraffe van, third wagon from left. Many of the cages shown with canvas tarps were replaced for the 1929 season. Pfening Archives.

in De Rosselli's story, had broken a finger in a fall. It was necessary to place a cast on her hand which made her appearance in the high wire act a short one. In all probability she resumed work later in the season.

The following week the *Billboard* again had good coverage of Robinson activities. The article said that at Pueblo, Colorado, July 17, a severe storm broke at five o'clock in the afternoon. The lot was a sea of mud. The storm lasted until about eight p. m. and at

Side show bannerline of the John Robinson Circus, season of 1930. Pfening Archives.



nine the show began with a fair size house on hand. Courtney Riley Cooper again visited, writing a story about John Robinson's early circus days. Several people who had been with the Buck Jones Wild West Show, which had folded, visited at La Junta, Colorado on July 18. They were motoring back to California. Charlie Luckey recently joined to handle props. At Great Bend, Kansas, Uncle Charles Andress was a guest. The 219 mile run from Great Bend to Topeka was made in seven hours. Charlie Young, boss of the canvas, had a painting bee every day between shows and especially on Sundays, with the poles and props being painted. The Hollis Family with Reno McCree, received a fine notice in the *Denver Post*.

Other items in the article said John Robinson did fine business in this section after an absence of five years. At North Platte, Nebraska, July 13, many of the Robinson folks visited the home and ranch of Buffalo Bill's early days. The stand also gave good business. The 235 mile jump to Denver was made on time. Two days in the mile high city gave some of the best houses of the season. Fred Bonfils, owner of the *Denver Post*, turned over reporters and photographers to the show and the result was wonderful displays. Otto Floto and his wife, Kitty Kruger, a former rider, were guests in Denver.

Some animal notes in the article said that Bert Noyes, superintendant of the menagerie, was busy in Denver and traded wild animals with the zoo. At Pueblo he had some new pumas, making a deal with the zoo there. Blackie Diller, in charge of baggage stock, bought six black draft horses in Denver.

One of the longest runs of the season came on Sunday, July 28, as the show jumped from Springfield, Illinois clear across Indiana and into Ohio to play Hamilton on Monday, July 29 as the

fourteenth week began. Three more Ohio dates followed, Hillsboro, Portsmouth, and Ironton. Then the show moved into West Virginia at Williamson, August 2, with Welch scheduled the next day, bringing the week to a conclusion.

The August 12, 1929 *Billboard* said that the long jump from Springfield, Illinois to Hamilton, Ohio was made in fine time. Many of the Robinson people went to Chicago to see the Ringling folks and others went to Peru, Indiana to visit Sells-Floto which was playing a Sunday date there. A large number of visitors came at Hamilton, including Mr. and Mrs. John Robinson and son. Several relatives of performers and staffers who lived in the area paid a visit at Hamilton. Billy Cronin, front-door manager, again was confined to a hospital and reports were very favorable on his condition. Duke Drukenbrod's side show had added a new giant, Chester Caff, 7 feet and 8 inches tall, who replaced Montana Hank who left to go to California on account of his mother's illness. Hillsboro, Ohio, July 30, produced excellent business and Welch, Virginia August 3, was named the banner day so far of the season.

A final item noted the cookhouse had been entirely remodeled. Steam tables, a steam wagon, a frigid-air system of cooling in ice boxes and a grocery wagon had been installed by Steward Al Dean. The cook tent now had screens. Steve Ross was assistant to Dean, while Walter Gred, was chef; Fred Hamilton was in charge of the steam wagon. Robert Jones, meat cutter, Carl Collins,

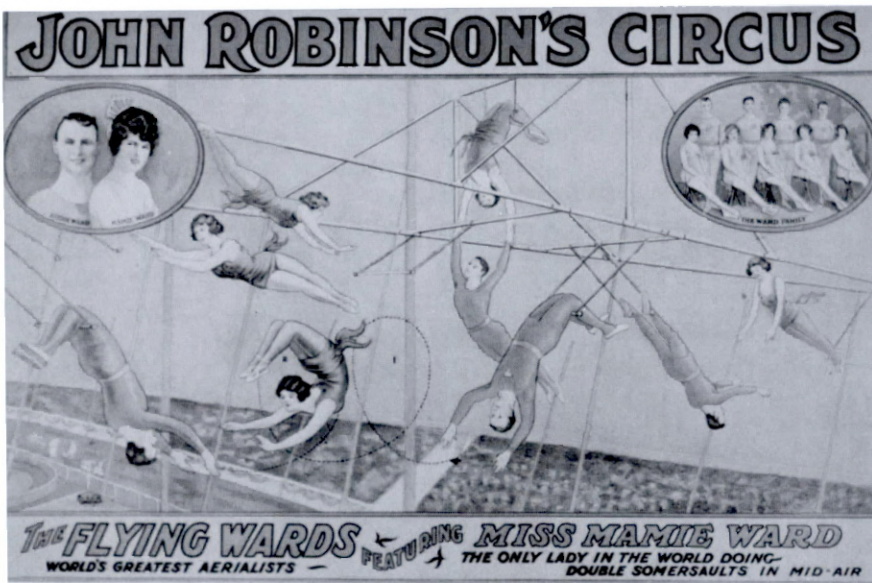


A packed midway during a side show bally on the 1929 John Robinson Circus. Pfening Archives.

stove man, and Bud Rockwell and Whitey Williams, cooks. C E. Beck, staff waiter, had a large crew.

The John Robinson show played Ironton, Ohio on Thursday, August 1, 1929 and that has become an important stand for the author while researching

Poster used to advertise the Flying Wards, John Robinson Circus, season of 1929. Circus World Museum Collection.



material for this article. Sometime back CHS member John F. Polacsek assembled in a booklet of clippings of articles and advertising that had appeared in the *Ironton Evening Tribune* of various circuses playing Ironton in the period of 1926-1949. Happily, 1929 John Robinson material was included. The first articles (readers provided by the show's advertising department) appeared on July 18 two weeks before circus day and continued up until the arrival of the show. Three different styles of advertising cuts were used. One cut carried a likeness of the bearded first John

Robinson whose show was created in 1824 (a date later discredited by historians but nevertheless the one the show itself proclaimed as its origin as long as it was on the road). Also sharing the cut was a clown's head and the enticing the words "everlastingly good." Another cut featured a different clown's head and carried the show's logo, two circles, one within the other. In the space between the circles was "The Old Reliable, Created in 1824" while inside the smaller circus was printed "Pioneer Circus of the World." A third cut used was the most elaborate. It advertised the "Massive Spectacle, King Solomon

and the Queen of Sheba" and pictured the king seated on his throne welcoming the queen. Also plugged on the cut was "Victor, World's Largest Hippopotamus," and "Tiny Mite, World's Smallest Hippopotamus." (Author's note. The show had several other styles of cuts not used in Ironton.)

The show readers stressed mainly the 106th tour, the spectacle, and a long list of menagerie creatures plus "so many more that space forbids



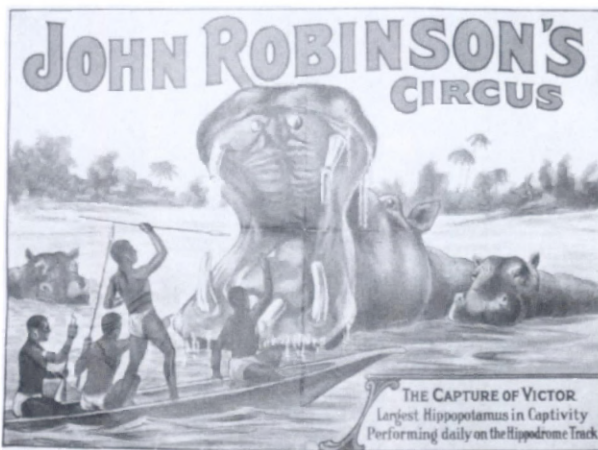
mentioning them all now," and of course the principal acts, Rudynoff family, Hollis Duo, Reno McCree Troupe etc. Also several prominent names in the clown contingent were listed. Standard stock photos were used to illustrate the readers including shots of the crowded midway, a group of pretty showgirls, clowns, elephant girls, and two different views of the riding acts. However, by far the biggest hype was for the John Robinson Fifty Year Club. A membership application was run giving space for the individual's name and address and a space to answer the question of when and where he or she saw the circus prior to 1880. Applicants were advised to send in the forms as soon as possible as the membership list in the club would close on July 31st, the day before the circus arrived. All members of the club would be the guests of the *Tribune* and the circus at a performance. Tickets would be issued from 10 to 12 in the morning of circus day at the *Tribune* office. The application for membership in the 50 Year Club came in the July 23 edition, and from then on, almost daily there was extended coverage giving the stories of various persons as to when and where they saw the show prior to 1880. The freight representative of the B & O Railroad said he had seen John Robinson in 1868, another 1872, others 1877, in any number of different locales and dates. One lady saw the show in 1879 and declared an elephant stirred lemonade with its trunk. One guy remembered the good old days back in the 1870's when saloon keepers took their license to the circus grounds and sold beer. One Squire Seymour Chinn of

Team of baggage stock with baggage wagon No. 75 on a John Robinson lot in 1930. Pfening Archives.

Russell, Kentucky wrote that he saw the show in 1879 at Greenup, Kentucky and that the show's vehicles crossed the river at Ironton by ferry but they took the elephants up to Haverhill and made them swim across the Ohio to Greenup. And so it went, fact and fiction all mixed together, but the promotion really brought in a wealth of publicity for the show.

One short article printed the day before circus day advised the Robinson train would arrive at 4 a. m. over the N & W Railroad and would unload at the freight depot at 5 a. m. Performances would be given at the Moulton lot at Eight and Lawrence streets at 2 and 8 p. m. with doors opening an hour before. It was headed "NO PARADE THURSDAY" and it was explained the full day would be devoted to removal of stock

John Robinson used this poster in 1929 to advertise "The Capture of Victor," the huge hippo. Pfening Archives.



and equipment to the show grounds and preparation for the performances.

As the fifteenth week began the show was still in West Virginia to play Bluefield but moved into Virginia the following day at Wytheville, August 6. It had been traditional routing for John Robinson to play in the Old Dominion during the month of August and 1929 was no exception. Next came East Radford and the show had scheduled Roanoke for August 8 but there was a report in the trade publications that the date was passed up on account of a prevalence of polio (called infantile paralysis in those days and deadly for circus business). The train continued on through Roanoke and moved to the stand scheduled the following day, Staunton. Covington on August 10 completed the week.

Two more Virginia stands came in the sixteenth week, Lynchburg, and South Boston, then the show moved southward into North Carolina to play Durham, Greensboro, Mount Airy, and Winston-Salem.

The August 24th, 1929 *Billboard* noted that business with John Robinson of late had been good. Billy Cronin, who had charge of the front door, had been laid up for the last two weeks in a hospital Williamson, West Virginia but was expected back soon. In Lynchburg, Virginia several of the boys from the Elks' National Home at Bedford visited at the matinee and ate in the cookhouse as guests of Mr. and Mrs. Jess Adkins. (Many old troupers spent their final days at the Elks Home.) A note of sadness said that Freddie Manskey, clown, recently dropped dead in the dressing room in his clown make-up. It was believed that he died of acute indigestion. A final item advised that Dixon (no first name given) had joined as announcer and appeared as the king in the spec.

A separate notice in the same issue said that the Concellos, two of the youthful stars of Mayme Ward's flyers, were receiving a great deal of publicity. Arthur was doing a full twisting somersault. There were now nine in the Ward act, Mayme doing the catching. The *Billboard* later ran a photo of Eileen Sullivan, Mayme Ward and

Agnes Ward, of the Flying Ward Troupe while with the John Robinson show. Also a roster of the Robinson Advertising Car No. 1 personnel was printed. It had William P. Backell, manager, Bernard Head, special agent, Sam Clauson, contracting press agent, and 26 other men to handle the billing.

As the seventeenth week started the show was in Asheville, North Carolina on August 19, then moved the next day into Tennessee for two dates, Morristown and Bristol, ventured back into Virginia to play Big Stone Gap on August 22, then returned to Tennessee for stands at Kinsport and Johnson City to complete the week.

The show started working the big cities in the state in the eighteenth week, with Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville. One more stand in Tennessee came at Columbia, August 29, then the route carried it into Alabama for Cullman and Alabama City. The show was getting into the deep south several weeks earlier than usual, probably to beat the competition Christy Bros. and Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West into the area. Sparks would later play its usual dates in the deep south as did any number of smaller outfits. It wasn't unusual in the last good years before the depression for some towns in the deep south to get two or even more circuses during the fall season. An example, Pensacola, Florida in 1929 saw John Robinson on September 5, then Christy Bros. on October 18, with Sparks coming in just a few days later.

A Sunday run of 133 miles over the Southern Railway moved the Robinson train from Alabama City, Alabama to Atlanta, Georgia where a big Labor Day stand was scheduled for Monday, September 2. According to E. W. Adams the circus gave three performances that day in order to accommodate the huge crowds. Our friend Adams in those days also frequently would write the *Billboard* on various matters pertaining to the circus. Later in the fall of 1929 he wrote that business with circuses in the South was not so bad and that people in the section go to shows when they had the money. He noted the three shows given by John Robinson on Labor Day and also mentioned that on September 23 at Shreveport, Louisiana the Sells-Floto Circus had to give three perfor-

mances, all to capacity business. Ringling-Barnum put on three performances on closing day, October 21 at Miami, Florida so as not to disappoint the crowds that came to see the Big Show. Christy Bros. on its first visit to Pensacola, Florida, October 18, with Sparks Circus four days behind, seated them on the ground up to the ring curbs. Sparks had them on the ground at St. Petersburg, Florida, October 28, behind the hurricane, and 101 Ranch Wild West broke records at Jackson, Mississippi, October 17.

After Atlanta, other dates played during the nineteenth week were scattered over three states. First came Columbus, Georgia on September 3, then the show returned to Alabama for a single stand at Montgomery and afterwards headed south to catch Pensacola, Florida in order to beat other shows into the town then immediately came back to Alabama to play Mobile and Selma. A note in the *Billboard* said that Jess Adkins went to the hospital in Columbus, Georgia for an infected foot and had to remain there for two weeks.

A long 196 mile run on the Southern moved the show out of Alabama back into Georgia at Rome where performances were given on September 9. The show, staying in Georgia, next travelled to Gainesville, and then to Athens for a stand, September 11. A rather long run of 159 miles took the Robinson show into South Carolina for Spartansburg, and this was followed by two more 100 plus mile jumps, to play Augusta, Georgia, September 13, and Charleston, South Carolina on Septem-

ber 14. The long moves were obviously made to put the show first into those towns. The September 21, 1929 *Billboard* covered the twentieth week of the John Robinson season and reported that the show had two capacity houses at Charleston, South Carolina on September 14, despite a heavy rain at night and Miller Bros. 101 Ranch playing the city the day before. The Ranch was one show that had beat Robinson into at least that one city in the deep south. Business at Augusta, Georgia on September 13 was also heavy with the big top packed to the ring curbs. According to Rex De Rosselli, press agent, Augusta was the banner day of the season to date.

Although the *Billboard* didn't comment on the John Robinson stand at Athens, Georgia on September 11, we do have an eyewitness for that historic date, it being the author, who as an 8 year old boy accompanied by his 14 year old brother caught the show that day. We spent some time on the lot before the performance, lingered at length in the menagerie, and while perched high on the blues caught the sights and sounds of the afternoon show. It was a never to be forgotten experience and to this day, some 58 years later, many of the events of that day are still firmly fixed in my mind. So with your indulgence dear readers please permit one of our senior members to relate these fond memories that came to a wide eyed eight year old so many years ago. After all, there's not too many of us around who can say they saw the old John Robinson show. Also, I'll pass on a few observations which all through my youth and even early manhood had been facts based on my visit to the show but in later years

John Robinson baggage stock lined up on the lot, season of 1930. Pfening Archives.



have proven to be, what I guess we can call, childhood fantasies. I'll explain. Even though I'll relate the fantasies, they will remain just that, and not be passed off as "the law according to Moses," which was a favorite saying of our old friend, Bill Woodcock Sr. of happy memory.

Even though I've had a nice circus life filled with such goodies as Sells-Floto with Tom Mix Himself in 1930, Hagenbeck-Wallace 1934, with its big cars and street parade, Al G. Barnes-Sells Floto and John Robinson Combined with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Stupendous New Features in 1938, and others too numerous to mention, the John Robinson show which I saw in both 1928 and 1929 remains as the favorite circus of my youth.

It was just a year before, the fall of 1928, in which our town had two circuses, Sparks and John Robinson, that I became hopelessly hooked as a circus fan. An added highlight to that double dose of circus goodies was fact Sparks also gave a grand free street parade. But I have always felt that what turned the trick was that we had a grown cousin who lived just a few hundred feet away from the old King Avenue circus grounds in Athens, Georgia. From his front yard you had a full view of the lot and all traffic to and from the lot passed right in front of his house. On his lawn adjacent to the sidewalk during both circus dates in 1928 he operated a small hot dog and soft drink stand. John Robinson had played on a Friday in 1928 and that meant no school the next day, so after catching the evening performance, we went back to my cousin's house where we saw the stream of wagons pulled by baggage horses and heavy tractors heading to the rail yards. God, it was heaven, and I would have stayed until the final wagon went by, had not my mother finally insisted that we go home and to bed. All of this now sets the stage for the John Robinson visit a year later.

John Robinson's stand in Athens,

Georgia was set for Wednesday, September 11, 1929. It would be the third straight yearly appearance for the show in Athens. The mid and late 20's saw the John show play extensively through this part of the South. It had been in Atlanta for four consecutive seasons. The show played Gainesville the day before Athens and was to be routed over the Southern Railway. Although the Gainesville Midland Railroad was a direct route from Gainesville to Athens and somewhat shorter the show elected to remain on the Southern to avoid interchange. The train moved up the main line some 13 miles to



John Robinson menage riders posed together on the lot in 1930. Harry Atwell photo in Pfening Archives.

Lula, then down a branch the rest of the way to Athens. The run was 50 miles.

Our local newspapers had announced the show would arrive early and unload at the Southern depot. The King Avenue showgrounds would be used. Unfortunately, I had been transferred to another grammar school on account of a change in school boundaries. Had I still been at the former College Avenue school the John Robinson wagons would have passed on the street beside the building. It was at this location that I witnessed the year before, the baggage wagons of the Mighty Sheesley shows, a large railroad carnival, being pulled by tractors and local dray trucks up the steep cobble stone street by the school.

Anyway, I was now a third grade student at Chase Street Elementary School which incidentally had been built on the former circus grounds. Ringling-Barnum on its last visit to Athens in 1922 had set up on the same ground

which now held the school. The new school year had begun a few days earlier. In those innocent years the school superintendent would dismiss students at noon on circus days and even earlier if there was to be a street parade. (In later years this policy was modified. In 1933 when Downie Bros. paraded they just marched the students up to the nearest spot where they could see it pass by, then it was back to class until a 1 p. m. dismissal.)

Since circus day was during the school week this time a parental decree said we would have to attend the matinee. My older brother was in high

school and it was agreed he would meet me back at the house after school was dismissed and we would go immediately to the King Avenue lot.

It didn't take long for me to cover the mile plus distance home, and before 12:30 my brother and I were moving at a fast pace toward the lot. We were on Hill Street right before it makes an S shaped curve a couple of blocks before it runs into King Avenue when on the street moving rather rapidly came one of the huge show trucks, probably a Republic, maybe a Mack, pulling six cage wagons behind it. The end cage was the little octagon shaped monkey den. This seems like a rather high number of cages for a single vehicle to be pulling, especially on some of the narrow streets, but all my life that number-six has stuck in my memory and some childhood sketches show the tractor with the six cages. I wish we had been at the King Avenue intersection where a left hand turn had to be negotiated but evidently the driver knew how to handle that. Once on King Avenue we stopped briefly by our cousin's house to see how his soft drink-hot dog stand was going. He was already in operation and would be, off and on, until the final crowds from the evening show had gone home. Then we beat it the final few minutes to the lot.

Of course I didn't realize it at the time, but cage wagons just arriving on the lot between 12:30 and 1 p. m.

meant a very late arrival. Why this occurred I don't know. The Southern is doubled tracked from Gainesville to Lula and there would have been no traffic on the branch to cause any delay that early in the morning. Possibly, there was some reason the show was late in loading in Gainesville, or there could have been some delay by the railroad, but anyway, it meant the matinee in Athens would be late in starting.

Since doors weren't open when we got on the lot we then went on a general tour of the circus grounds. We must have walked all over the place several times before the doors opened. I recall seeing the baggage stock tents, the cook and dining tents in operation, but most of all I loved the red painted baggage wagons, virtually all of them titled and numbered, parked about the lot. All tents were up. I'm sure the delay now was caused by the seats not being ready in the big top.

When we did go through the marquee into the menagerie tent I guess we were among the first to enter. Although the sideshow was in full operation this was one attraction that we never visited and I don't ever recall being inside one until 1937, on Wallace Bros. when it was necessary if you wanted to view the elephants and caged animals as the sideshow and menagerie were combined in a single tent, a practice of many smaller shows in those days, and even large outfits later on.

Inside the John Robinson menagerie were wonders to behold. I wanted to spend plenty of time there as I was still fussing about a year ago when we came out of the big show following the evening performance and expecting to spend some more time with the wild varmints, only to be greeted by the shock of viewing an almost empty lot. The menagerie was gone, even the sideshow had passed up the chance for one more crack at the towners as they exited the big top, and it too was loaded up. But my brother assured me this time the menagerie would still be in place and not to worry as we would see it again on the way out.

In my memory I can still very vividly picture the menagerie interior. As you entered on the right was the line of elephants and I correctly remembered there were "about a dozen." (For years I

John Robinson Circus
Official Route - Season 1929
106 Annual Tour



Attractive cover of the 1929 John Robinson Circus season route folder. Pfening Archives.

had it firm in my mind that on Sells-Flotto with Tom Mix Himself in 1930 I had counted 17 bulls, but our old friend, Bill Woodcock Sr. who was with it, assured me I had seen only 13.) Following the line of elephants was the entrance to the big top. Immediately to the left of the entrance was Big Victor's cage, the huge male hippo, and he was by far the largest of his kind that I had ever before or since seen. Now, comes either a true childhood memory or a fantasy, but since that visit I said the cage was painted "pea green." (Weird, isn't it?) It was a light green, I'm almost positive, but why "pea green?" As for colors of the other cages it seems most were of rather dark shades, blues, greens, and I'm sure reds, but I can recall none being white but of course several may have been that hue. The cages occupied the entire side opposite the elephants. In the center of the tent were the rather large concession stands and also the little octagon monkey cage

was there. I'm not quite clear as to where the rest of the lead stock were placed, but think they were staked out next to the elephants. For some strange reason I have no recollection of the hybrid zebras which were with the show but I do remember some small ponies and the camels. Likewise I don't remember much about the cage which housed the pygmy hippo, Jimmy, billed as Tiny Mite or where it was placed in the menagerie. I guess little Jimmy was just shadowed by Big Victor, but I positively remember getting a kick out of seeing Jimmy making the walk around the hippodrome track during the performance. At my age I had no idea he was a different breed of hippo, only he was a baby and the other the big papa. A few years later while making one of the Tarzan movies Victor killed Jimmy on location.

Then it was into the big top. I'm sure we sat high up on the first section of blues on the short side at far end of the tent. The band was to our left in front of the back door and the spec and performers came into the big top at the right side of the bandstand, or maybe both sides.

Strangely enough I really don't remember too much about the spec except that the elephants and camels all wore very beautiful blankets and other trappings. You'll never guess the couple of acts I remember over all of the rest. Believe it or not, they came very early in the program, right after the spec. One was the football horses, one of which was in the end ring right in front of us. A clown worked the act.

Those in the audience would throw at the horse huge beach type inflated balls and the horse would hit them with both hind feet kicking backwards and the ball would fly to the top rear planks of the blues. We kids scrambled all over each other trying to get an opportunity to throw in the ball. Also, maybe as part of the same set, there were donkeys on revolving tables. The tables would be spun at a high speed and at a tilted angle but the sure footed beasts would mount the tops and stick with it. Another very simple act, dog and pony show stuff but highly effective, were dogs and monkeys riding small ponies at break neck speed around the rings. The monkeys were simply hilarious and

these acts put the audience in a happy mood before the serious circus stuff began, the riding acts, high wire, and flying trapeze.

Although the printed program said it was Big Victor who would make the walk around the hippodrome track in reality it was Tiny Mite, or little Jimmy. Victor indeed for many seasons had made this walk but now he spent his time on the road just lounging in the tank in his den.

A minor disappointment in the 1929 program was the lack of any kind of steel arena act. Mabel Stark's tigers the previous year had provided me with one of childhood's finest circus memories and I guess that might be the reason that to this date caged animal acts are perhaps my favorites.

When the performance was over we exited to the menagerie and after a reasonable stay, left and went back to our cousin's house up the street for a while but before dark we headed for home.

Now, comes the fantasy promised earlier. Somehow, it got fixed in my mind that John Robinson had a steam calliope, which I had seen smoking on the lot and had later heard playing its twilight concert. This idea never left me even after I was grown and started dabbling in circus history. Finally, in late 40's or early 50's, the John Robinson wagon list surfaced. On it was no steam calliope. Then in the 50's I questioned both E. W. Adams and Arnold Maley about the steamer. Adams rightly remembered that in 1929 that Sparks had one and also paraded, and that Robinson didn't parade, but he didn't recall one way or the other about a steam calliope. Maley, when asked the same question, said that yes, he thought the show did have one, that Jess Adkins had dug it out of the wagon graveyard at Peru to carry on the road and use for lot concerts. But he was really unclear on details and I later felt, he was confused,

and that it was in 1932 on Hagenbeck-Wallace that Adkins fixed up the old Two Jesters steam calliope and took it out on the road for lot concerts.

Although discouraged I hadn't given up entirely on a 1929 John Robinson steamer. When I acquired the 1929 issues of *Billboard* in the mid 50's I lost no time in scanning each issue from cover to cover looking for some mention of a steam calliope, or even if one

binned Sells Floto-John Robinson Circus would play that city. I knew Sells Floto well by then, having witnessed its wonders in 1930 and it was even bigger than John Robinson so what a tremendous show I thought that must have been. To have even suggested going to Atlanta to see the show in depression ridden 1932 would not have even gotten a response.

As a final note to this saga, I did

have some sort of visual reminder of John Robinson's 1929 Athens stand for several years. It was in the form of a large, probably 20 sheet, litho posted a building--maybe abandoned--in Eastville, a small community located about 10 miles out of Athens on the old Epps Bridge road we often traversed when going out to my grandparent's place in rural Walton County,



The cookhouse steam boiler wagon of the John Robinson show is pictured during the 1929 season. Pfening Archives.

of the old players such as Crazy Ray Choisser might be listed among the Robinson personnel, if so, then I'd know for sure.

Finally a "new" set of Robinson 1929-30 photos turned up. One shot pictured the steam boiler wagon, then I knew that was my "steam calliope." It had a boiler, smoke was coming out, so was a little steam, and with some of the sideboards etc. up, then a young 8 year old could believe he had indeed seen a steam calliope on the John Robinson lot. But what about hearing it play at twilight? Well, I'm sure that must have been the Sparks steamer the previous year that I had heard during its early evening concert.

My beloved John Robinson never again came to Athens and this I could not understand why for a number of years. I had noticed in the Atlanta papers that in September 1932 the com-

some 18 miles away. The litho had the John Robinson title and I'm sure there were tigers on it, in fact I'm reasonably sure it was a tiger act inside the steel arena which was pictured. Possible it was old paper left over from the previous year when Mable Stark was with the show, or it could be some of stock sheet. I'd always look for the litho. The pavement ended at the Athens city limits and it was then red dirt roads all the way. You'd go over Epps Bridge crossing the Oconee River, around dead man's curve where many a high speed bootlegger must have come to grief, then on through Eastville. At one time it boasted several brick stores, a bank which went broke about World War I, but by late 20's it wasn't much of a town--but at least the John Robinson sheet was there. For some reason the paper was never covered by another show or at least until a different road we could take offered some additional miles of pavement so we started going that way and left Eastville to itself. God, what I wouldn't give for a photograph of that billing stand. I often rode with

an uncle who photographed everything in site over a several county area. His camera was always with him, but did I ever suggest that he take a shot of the John Robinson bill for me? Unfortunately, I didn't. Life is filled with little regrets like that.

But now back to the John Robinson route. About the time the show was in Athens word had been passed around the circus world about the history making event that had taken place on September 6, 1929. On that day John Ringling purchased all properties of the American Circus Corporation, including its five active circuses, Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Al G. Barnes, John Robinson, and Sparks. In the deal were the Peru, Indiana quarters, also property in Denver formerly used for quarters by Sells-Floto. The price was approximately two million and Ringling had to borrow heavily from some New Yorkers to finance the purchase. Thus the John Robinson Circus was now owned by the now undisputed king of the circus world. Ringling passed out the word he would make no managerial changes at present and all of the shows would play out their projected routes for the remainder of the 1929 season.

John Robinson's twenty-first week began with the show at Columbia, South Carolina on September 16. It played Greenville the following day, then went up into North Carolina for dates at Charlotte, Concord, High Point, and Statesville. All of the twenty-second week was spent in North Carolina with the following cities seeing the show, Salisbury, Albermarle, Burlington, Raleigh, Henderson, and Weldon.

Harry LaPearl told the *Billboard* that when the show was in Salisbury North Carolina on September 23, Frank (Denny) Denham, superintendent of ushers, and Bertha Rowland, sister of Stella Cronin, iron-jaw and serial performer, were married. The ladies gave a shower at which both the bride and groom re-

ceived many beautiful presents from their friends on the show.

The show next made a 367 mile Sunday run to Trenton, New Jersey where it appeared as the grandstand attraction for the Trenton Interstate Fair the entire twenty-third week, Sept. 30-October 5.

During the late 1920's the American Circus Corporation booked several of

received \$25,000 for the week's engagement and the fair management considered it an excellent buy in view of the potential publicity it created and the strong array of attractions provided in three rings and the hippodrome track. The article went on to mention that the fair booked an independent midway, that is shows and rides from various

sources rather than have a single carnival furnish it all. There were rides from Monarch Exposition Shows and various attractions from a number of sources. The piece noted that the John Robinson Circus sideshow which topped the midway, had 220 foot front with depth of 495 feet which was necessary to accomodate the menagerie. (Author's note. This was a special deal in which a charge was made for patrons to view the combined sideshow and menagerie.) The interior of the tent, which had 14 sideshow attractions plus the menagerie, was nicely embellished with varicolored pennants and special lighting effects. The banner front had 16 banners, 12 x 20 ft.

Other notes in the article said the show train made a good run from Weldon, North Carolina to Trenton arriving at 10 o'clock on Sunday night. Everything was up by 4 a. m. on Monday. J. Fred Margerum, general manager of the fair, met the circus train as it rolled into the rail yards of the fair. Margerum then had a midnight breakfast with the show's official. A large horse tent 890 x 100 ft. containing the various ring and baggage stock was spotted on the midway where fair visitors congregated in large numbers. Two ponies were born on the run to the city.

The circus, which was billed three times as much as compared with a still date, had New Jersey territory flooded with posters within a 40 mile radius, up to and including Philadelphia and adjacent points. The advertising car arrived in Trenton on September 15 with 33



Keep these dates in mind

EAST WARREN-CONNORS SUNDAY MAY 26	HIGHLAND PARK THURSDAY MAY 30
ANN ARBOR MONDAY MAY 27	PONTIAC FRIDAY MAY 31
GRAND RIVER-MEYERS TUESDAY MAY 28	PORT HURON SATURDAY JUNE 1
HIGHLAND PARK WEDNESDAY MAY 29	VERNOR-DIX SUNDAY JUNE 2

JOHN ROBINSON'S

CIRCUS

GRAND STAND CHAIRS RESERVED
 AND GENERAL ADMISSION TICKETS
 ON SALE CIRCUS DAY AT TICKET
 WAGONS ON CIRCUS GROUNDS

This unusual newspaper ad appeared in the *Detroit Free Press* on May 26, 1929 telling of eight cities in Michigan that would see the John Robinson Circus. John Polacsek collection.

its units for week long fair engagements. Hagenbeck-Wallace played several fairs in 1928 and 1929. Unfortunately, there was some rain during the week in Trenton but the event was proclaimed to have been very successful. The three rings and all aerial rigging was set up facing the permanent type grandstand of the fair which was used for seating.

The October 12, 1929 *Billboard* had a major article telling about the fair. It stated that a policy change by the fair this year was to bring in the John Robinson Circus as a grandstand attraction. It was considered the greatest free attraction the fair ever had. The show

men, and the fair provided six auto trucks for the different brigades, who posted 16,000 sheets of paper. In addition to the extensive billing of the circus, the fair used printed matter from the Donaldson Lithograph Co.; 200 24 sheet banners, 100 streamers, 1,200 one sheet muslin banners, 40,000 blotters and 80,000 dodgers. The fair advertised in 100 newspapers and journals. Each year the budget for this purpose was \$25,000.

While in Trenton, Lorenz Barth, known professionally as "Waxo," the mechanical man, who had started the season with the John Robinson sideshow and then had to withdraw from the road on account of illness, returned to the show and completed the season with it.

Another article the following week said that during the stand in Trenton there were four days out of six with rain and cold weather. The performance which was given in the open in front of the grand stand was well received and flattering press notices were in the papers. On Tuesday Harry LaPearl and the clowns went to the hospital and entertained the crippled children. This made a big spread in all the papers. Blackie Diller, boss hostler, gave daily parades with his wonderful baggage stock and was the proud possessor of many nice ribbons issued by the fair board. Diller drove 80 head of horses at one time and this feature was placed on the fair program for the rest of the engagement.

Leaving Trenton the show made a Sunday run of 284 miles to Richmond, Virginia and spent the entire twenty-fourth week as the grandstand attraction of the Virginia State Fair, October 7-12. This would be the second of the two week long fair engagements played by the show in 1929. The Melville-Reiss Shows, railroad carnival, furnished the midway with nine rides, 19 shows, a fine representation of concessions.

The October 19, 1929 *Billboard* told the story of the Richmond fair stand. It said that excellent weather made the



Chariot pulled by team of hybred zebras in the John Robinson spec during the 1929 season. Pfening Archives.

event and produced record breaking crowds. The new \$60,000 grandstand evoked favorable commendation and was a valuable addition to the plant. The present midway location was somewhat disappointing to the Melville-Reiss Shows, which it was understood, would be better arranged next year.

The John Robinson Circus was the undisputed headline offering at the fair and clicked with excellent results, using the same layout as at the Trenton Fair, only augmented with its own seats, which were constructed around the rings facing the grandstand, where many circus patrons were able to enjoy the big spectacular show that was given twice daily, at 2:30 and 8:15. This was the first time the Virginia State Fair had dispensed with free grandstand acts in favor of a charged admission show. Entrance to the grandstand was made through the sideshow of the circus, with two ticket wagons on each side of the entrance. The Melville-Reiss Shows received 30 per cent of the intake of the Robinson sideshow receipts as part of the deal. The circus arrived early Sunday afternoon from Trenton and the public was admitted to the fairgrounds free of charge, which proved a good ad for the circus and the fair. The Melville-Reiss Shows experienced a six hour delay in getting out of Lynchburg as the Southern Railway engine was too light to move the 30 car train, but arrived in Richmond early Sunday morning.

Additional information in the article

said the fair came in for extensive advertising as the John Robinson Circus posted 19,000 pieces of paper within a wide radius, which included also the heavy billing of the Melville-Reiss Shows. The fair expended the sum of \$20,000 for advertising, both billboards and newspapers. Forty-two weekly newspapers and the Richmond papers were used. One hundred 24 sheet stands were used through-

out this section.

The new grandstand had a seating capacity of 4,018 and those seats brought \$1.00 each, plus 35 boxes at \$1.25. Considerable revenue was derived by the sale of seats that encircled the rings, which brought 50 cents each and were well occupied during the matinees. Cold weather at night hurt the grandstand attendance, which also applied to the midway.

The October 26, 1929 *Billboard* said the show's engagement at Richmond had been very fine. An enlarged production of the King Solomon spec was put on. Local papers carried very good stories of the circus. During Saturday afternoon the performance was stopped and the management had the honor of introducing Josie DeMott, a rider of the old days. Special camera men were on hand to photograph this great rider with the Hollis-McCree troupe of riders. The circus presented her with a large bouquet of flowers. Frank Portillo, of Pathe News, was on hand for the movies.

E. W. Adams spoke to the author often about the Robinson stand at the Richmond fair and gave him two photos taken at the time, which were published in the May-June issue. He especially commented on the performance given in the outdoors arena and praised the magnificent spec the show put on that season. No mention was made either by Adams or the *Billboard* about the financial arrangement between the show and the Richmond fair. No doubt it was on some sort of percentage deal since admission was charged, unlike the free gate at Trenton in which the show was paid a flat 25 G's.

After Richmond only a week of

the season remained, the twenty-fifth. Following two week long engagements it was now back to one day stands. The show moved on to Newport News, Virginia for performances on Monday, October 14. It was in Norfolk the next day then dipped into North Carolina for the final stands of the season.

Cities played were Elizabeth City, New Bern, Kinston, and Goldsboro, October 19, which was the last date of the 1929 season. Following the two performances in Goldsboro the train made the run back to the Peru quarters.

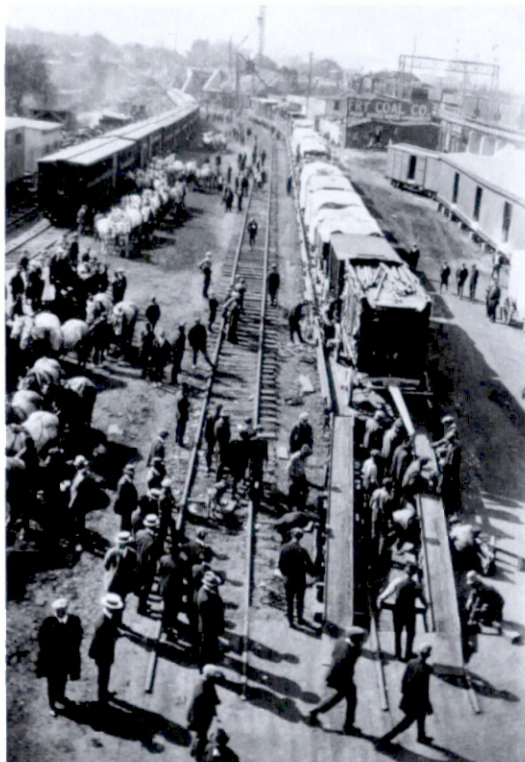
Total mileage for the season was 13,419.

Rex de Rosselli gave the news of the Robinson closing which was printed in the November 2, 1929 *Billboard*. During the final week of the season there were many little social affairs. Duke Drukenbrod gave the sideshow personnel a chicken dinner and he was presented with a lounging robe set. George Lysle didn't have any sickness among the ring stock and Blackie Diller won more than 50 ribbons with his baggage stock. After the closing in Goldsboro the personnel scattered as usual. The Neiss Troupe sailed for Cuba; the Aerial Kellys played vaudeville; Mickey LaMotte and Arabs went on the Publix Time (Vaudeville); Mayme Ward, vaudeville, while many performers were scheduled for winter dates.

E. W. Adams also wrote in the same issue that he was now at home in Atlanta and wanted to tell the show world that his home folks loved circuses and would turn out en masse when the weather permitted. He again mentioned the three performances John Robinson put on in Atlanta on Labor Day, also that on the following Monday the 101 Ranch Wild West had a good matinee and capacity night house, and finally on October 15, Ringling-Barnum had two capacity houses.

All indications were that 1929 was a very good season for John Robinson, much better weatherwise and financially than the previous year. The November 1929 issue of the *White Tops* commented that many shows had closed earlier than usual this season. Sells-Floto's final stand was in Paducah, Kentucky on October 14, Robbins Bros. closed October 24 in DeSota, Missouri while Ha-

genbeck-Wallace finished the season October 27 at Dallas, Texas after playing the Texas State Fair for two weeks.



The John Robinson Circus unloading in rail yards, about 1929. Pfening Archives.

During the season Hagenbeck-Wallace had played nine full week stands at fairs. There had been two circus casualties, Gentry Bros. which went bankrupt October 22 at Paris, Tennessee and Silvan-Drew which was sold at auction a few weeks later. As mentioned earlier the Buck Jones Wild West folded during the summer.

Late October saw the Wall Street stock market crash and the start of the great depression but by then most of the shows had already closed their season's and were in winter quarters. However, at the time no "experts" were correctly predicting the severity or length of the depression. Most felt it was only a temporary setback and that 1930 would produce another fine circus season. They were wrong and no one would learn it more painfully than John Ringling. But at present, in the late fall of 1929, all of his six rail shows had come back to their quarters strong winners. Sells-Floto had enjoyed its

most profitable season ever and Al G. Barnes one of its best. Ringling had his six railers quartered in four separate locales; Ringling-Barnum was in Sarasota, Florida, Sparks in Macon, Georgia, Al G. Barnes, Baldwin Park, California, while at the big Peru, Indiana quarters were Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, and John Robinson. Very shortly the road managers for the 1930 season would be announced. There would be only one change among the Ringling owned shows. Ira M. Watts would replace Henry B. Gentry in charge of Sparks. Jess Adkins would again be manager of John Robinson and the show would go out in 1930 for the final time. It would become the first casualty of the great depression which within the decade would consume all of the former American Circus Corporation shows.

EPILOG:

This concludes the current series of John Robinson articles by the author. As mentioned before there will be no article on the 1930 season, because the John Robinson show was adequately covered in the author's article, "John Ringling's Circus Empire--His Six Railroad Circuses in 1930" which was published in the *White Tops*, November-December 1973, January-February 1974, and March-April 1974 issues. Back copies can be obtained from the publisher of that magazine. During this current 1929 article we are running a number of "new" photos which have turned up for both the 1928 and 1930 seasons. It is the author's intention to eventually backtrack and cover the John Robinson seasons for 1920, 1921, and 1922 as basically the show used different equipment from that used during the 1923-30 seasons.

PHOTOS

Four 8 x 10 black and white photos of the Cole Bros. Circus train wreck July 27, 1945, Brainard, Minn.

\$12.00 Postpaid

Bill Watson
3522 R. Willow Ave.
Castle Shannon, PA 15234

The 1987 Circus Historical Society Convention

By Fred D. Pfening III

Returning to Milwaukee in conjunction with the Great Circus Parade for a second straight year, the Circus Historical Society began its 1987 convention on July 8 as members watched the set-up of the Great American Circus in the morning and the arrival of the Great Circus Train in the afternoon. That evening vintage films from the Circus World Museum were shown at the Marc Plaza Hotel, the convention headquarters.

The next morning personnel from the Great American Circus conducted a behind the scenes tour of the show which gave the membership a good background when they attended the performance that afternoon. The exhibition was beefed up for this date by the addition of Kay Rosaire and her mixed wild animal act, the Loyal riding family featuring Tim Loyal, and Bobby Moore and his elephants. A highlight of the show was Tiny Tim singing Happy Birthday to member Bob Kitchen who was celebrating the anni-

Calliope brains gather in front of the America steam calliope, Fred Dahlinger, Alexander P. Clark, Herbie Head, and Tom Parkinson (l. to r.). Fred D. Pfening III photo.

versary of his birth that day. Historical papers were presented that evening. C. W. Eldridge gave a talk and slide presentation on "Tattooing in the Circus." A professional tattooist, Eldridge has interviewed many tattooed side show attractions. Gordon Brown followed with a paper entitled "Willie Hunt

sas in the late 19th century. Bill Rhodes concluded the papers with a slide presentation and discussion on "Ringling-Barnum Mack Trucks," which detailed the careers of these legendary vehicles on the Big One.

On Friday morning the faithful gathered in the Circus World Museum cook-

house to learn about the circus business in general and the Great American Circus in particular. Great American owner Allan C. Hill led the discussion in which staffers Jim Ride-nour, Rod Ruby, Billy Martin, and show headliner Tiny Tim described their function on the circus. Afterwards, they were all bombarded with questions. The session

concluded with Tiny Tim singing about ten of the songs which have made him famous in an impromptu concert for the CHS. His signature piece "Tiptoe Through the Tulips" was one of the selections.

Vice-President Greg Parkinson took time from his busy schedule to head up that afternoon's discussion on the administration and logistics of the Great Circus Parade. Bob Parkinson, Dave

Richard J. Reynolds (l.) and Greg Parkinson visit in the menagerie on the parade grounds. Tom Parkinson photo.



Unloading one of the flats at the parade grounds. Fred Pfening Jr. photo.

(Farini), El Nino Eddie (Lulu) and the Missing Link (Krao)--An Amazing Family." It traced the remarkable career of Hunt, a premier 19th century wire walker and inventor of the human cannonball act; his adopted son, Eddie who worked in drag under the name Lulu; and his one-time ward Krao who was one of the great side show attractions ever. Orin King's paper on the J. M. Barry Circus was next. It traced the travels of a small wagon show which toured Kan-



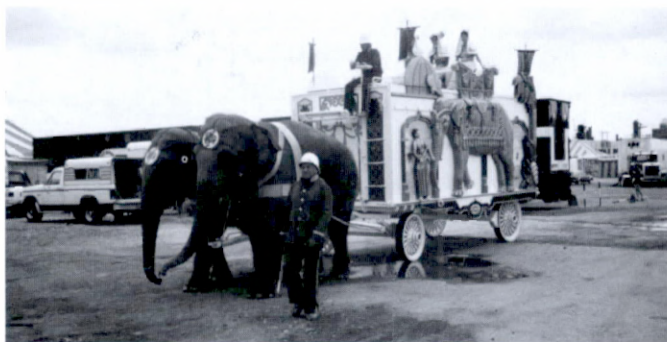


Bobby Moore, Smokey Jones, and Bobby Gibbs (l. to r.) at the Saturday morning seminar on elephants. Fred Pfening Jr. photo.

SaLoutos, Harold Burdick and Marv Gauger of the Circus World Museum staff all discussed their role in making the parade and its related events a reality, after which the members again had the opportunity to ask questions.

That evening the banquet was held at the Marc Plaza with President Pfening acting as master of ceremonies. After all the officers gave brief talks, Bill Kline, head of Sarasota's circus parade, discussed that event. He was followed by Linda Diehl who had recently received national publicity by paying \$12,000 at an American Cancer Society charity auction for a date with Allan Hill. She related that her date was a trip to Milwaukee to participate in all the circus parade events which included the CHS activities. Allan Hill spoke next about his career in the circus business. He was given a one year honorary membership in the organiza-

Great American Circus personnel Jim Ridenour, Tiny Tim, Allan Hill, Fred Pfening III, and Billy Martin (l. to r.) at their session. Fred Pfening Jr. photo.



Smokey Jones with Bobby Moore's elephants hitched to the elephant tableau on parade morning. Fred Pfening Jr. photo.

tion for his generous help in making the convention a success.

ran trainer Smokey Jones. They stressed the need for zoo and circus people to work more closely together in breeding efforts. That afternoon the great Merle Evans addressed the group and answered questions. He discussed both his pre-circus career as well as his amazing tenure with Ringling-Barnum which lasted, with only slight interruption, from 1919 to 1970. The day finished with more old films at the hotel, although many members stayed on the circus grounds to watch the Great American tear-down and a circus-themed fireworks display.

On Sunday morning members viewed preparations in the staging area or staked out spots along the route to watch the Great Circus Parade. The march itself was probably the best ever with a number of new features including the Al G. Barnes elephant tableau, the Field of the Cloth of Gold riders in beautiful costumes, Ringling-Barnum's Living Unicorn atop one of the English wagons, and the rebuilt Ringling hippo den.

While registration was down a bit from last year, the meeting was nevertheless well attended with about 125 at the banquet. Despite the full schedule, members still had enough free time to visit with friends and wander the parade grounds. In contrast to a year ago the weather was hot and sunny during the entire meeting save for a flash shower right before parade time. The death of Tu-tall, the Circus World Museum's giraffe and star of last year's parade, was the only sad note during the festivities and except for that, everyone appeared to have an enjoyable time.

The principal speaker of the evening, however, was Bobby Gibbs whose hilarious account of hauling exotic animals over the interstate highway system had the audience in stitches. A number of members remarked that he was funnier than last year which was high praise. Gibbs finished on a serious note which succinctly summarized the relationship between circus people and circus historians. To Gibbs, a sort of immortality is conferred upon show-folks in circus historians' articles and books by keeping their memories alive after they have died. "Thanks to your written accounts," he concluded, "I will go on living as long as pages are read." Indeed.

After a short break the fifth annual circusiana auction commenced. Some wonderful material went on the block including one of Fred Bradna's contracts with Ringling-Barnum, a rare Vargas poster for an AIDS benefit performance, a number of checks signed by circus luminaries, and many posters. It raised over \$2400 for the organization, which while falling short of last year's record \$2700, was still the second most ever raised and a great windfall for the organization.

Saturday morning began with a brunch in the Circus World Museum Cookhouse followed by an interesting seminar on the state of elephants in America led by Bobby Gibbs, independent act owner Bobby Moore, and vete-

Only Big Show Coming

BY ORIN C. KING

Chapter 1 PART TWO

In the same category as the "Million of Dollars Expended" was the claim that, "In its triumphal march across Missouri, it was seen by 800,000 People, who name it but to praise!" Missouri in 1869, 800,000 show-goers? It certainly speaks well of G. F. Bailey & Co.

A handout run in the Topeka *Commonwealth*, May 30, describes the circus as "something entirely new. It has thirty star performers, three clowns, and five lady riders and gymnasts, besides the finest performing horses and trick ponies ever attached to any exhibition. The famous Senorita Sagrino, the beautiful M'lle. Elise, the premier French equestrienne, Josephine Rowland, and Madame Zellica, are included among the lady artistes.

"The procession will enter the town about ten o'clock. It is described as the most magnificent and dazzling display ever seen in this country. Elephants in harness, droves of camels, bedecked in gorgeous oriental trappings are first seen drawing the massive Golden Car, containing Wither's Washington Cornet Band in full uniform. Then appear the 'gay cavaliers and the faire ladies' mounted upon their superb performing horses, clad in shining armor--the ladies robed in velvet and gold with the plumage of rare birds, and the pearls of the orient adding increased loveliness to their spirited, chaste and pleasing appearance; following comes a vast array of massive animal dens, all new and eloquently decorated and which are described in the St. Louis papers with great minuteness, but which our limited space obliges us to omit; then comes the entire retinue of the vast concerns, in regular order, making a procession nearly one mile in length."

On June 9, the *Commonwealth* ran a recount of the performers and reported,

"Twenty-five star performers, four lady riders, three clowns, and a host of attractions." The show claimed "300 men and horses."

"Bailey's great circus and menagerie has come and gone," reported the *Commonwealth*, June 11. "Immense crowds visited both exhibitions, and we suppose that all were pleased. The menagerie consisted of a fine collection of animals from all quarters of the globe, and the performances in the ring were of the usual character. The street pageant in the morning was one of the finest we have seen for years. The jokes of the clowns were stale, and some of the ring performances were worn-out, but the



Dan Rice, one of the great names in American circus history, brought his show to Kansas in 1869 and again in 1872. Pfening Archives.

performances as a whole were as good of the kind as are generally exhibited to Western people."

Dan Rice's Own Circus appeared in Topeka, Monday, August 16, 1869. The day was noteworthy only for Rice's arrest for assaulting Mark Sage. Rice

claimed that he flogged Sage because Sage on two occasions insulted Rice's daughter. Sage denied that he insulted Rice's daughter or any other woman. Dan was tried before Esquire Barr, found guilty and fined \$25 and costs.

Rice's ad in the Topeka *Commonwealth*, August 7, is an interesting display of the talents of Dan as he must have sounded to his audiences as he spouted doggeral in the circus ring.

Dan's verse abounds in forced meter and obvious rhymes, but it apparently passed for great wit in the rural areas of his day.

"DAN RICE!

"And, Cap and Bells in hand,
"Stands forth the Leader of the Classic Band,

"As Satirist, Humorist, Clown and Commentator,

"Armed CAP-A-PIE in suit of Motely Mail,

"With wit's keen dagger ennui assail;
"Open the oyster of the world to view,

"And let us see it as 'tis seen by you.
"But, ere tilt you mount your long eared steed,

"Pause-----introducing

"MR. CHARLES F. REED,
"Most brilliant 'Star' from centaur's constellation:

"The first Equestrian of this mighty nation,

"Graceful as Paris lightly bounding forth,

"The sole successor of great Levi North."

Etc.

Each stanza led to the name of a different performer.

"Like Grecian Athlete

"BURNNEL RUNNELLS comes

"Tossing to center-peak his AGILE SONS."

Etc.

"MISS JENNIE PERRY,

"Poised on bounding steeds

"Is 'Poetry of Motion' charming leads;"

Etc.

"MISS LIZZIE MARCELLUS

"Makes all the girls jealous

"Riding over the hearts of their beaux,"

Etc.

"Who in this country does not know the

"PETE AND BARNEY MULES?

"Whose coming doings shame the tricks

"Of some two legged Fools."

Etc.

The Topeka ad contained no mention of a parade.

The advertisement appearing in the *Western Home Journal*, Lawrence, for the exhibition of Tuesday, August 17, is not written in rhyming doggeral, but it does explain the absence of a parade.

"Ed Menter's Admirable Silver Cornet Band, will appear on horseback. But no street swindle or gratuitous parade will be given at the expense of those who pay to see a circus, and not a bedizened and 'loud' outside advertisement on wheels. Mr. Rice's motto is inside performance without outside display, instead of outside display without inside performance."

"As this magnificent establishment traveled entirely by rail and steamboat," the ad continued, "its horses are exempt from the ruinous toil of the road, and retain unimpaired that nobility of presence, power of motion and fiery spirit absolutely indispensable to perfect and thrilling equestrian representation."

Dan Rice was not operating a flat car circus, but moved the equipment from box cars to show lot by transfer teams. In Lawrence, as in Topeka, "admission, 75 cts. children under 10 years, 50 cts."

1 8 7 0

James Robinson, the greatest bare-back rider of his time, in 1870, brought his very own show to Kansas--James Robinson's Great Circus and Animal Show.

One of the earliest towns Robinson played was Ft. Scott, Saturday, June 4. The Ft. Scott *Daily Monitor* reported conflicting views of the show. In one column, June 4, the *Monitor* stated, "The vulgar fraction of a circus--called a 'side show'--yesterday spread its dirty bit of canvas on the vacant lot opposite the Monitor office."

The day following the exhibition the

Monitor reported, "A very large crowd witnessed the exhibition given by Robinson's circus in this city yesterday. In the evening the crowd was tremendous, every available foot of space inside the tent being occupied. We do not know the capacity of the pavilion, but should think that at least 2,000 people



James Robinson in his riding garb, c. 1863. Pfening Archives.

were present. The performance was good throughout, and the riding of Mr. Robinson and his young son was absolutely wonderful, and far eclipsed anything we have ever before seen in equestrianism. It is one of the few travelling circuses worthy of patronage."

Newspaper advertising for Robinson always mentioned "21 ACTS 21 IN THE RING." At Ft. Scott only James Robinson and Charles White were mentioned in the advertisements. White, "King of the Lion Conquerors," worked "six trained NUMIDIAN LIONS." The ad appearing in the Junction City *Weekly Union* for the performances on Thursday, June 9, listed some of the acts. The following acts were listed without any description or explanation: The Kogical Ku Klux Klan, Life In The Clouds, The Flying Phenomena, The Lions Leap, The Bar And Sentinel.

Performers included M'dlle. Helene Demerean, the Victorelli's, Nicolo Nor-

ton, Morenzo Mayo, Mr. Kennedy, William Smead, George Lester and Thomas Watson, but no mention was made of their individual specialties.

In a review of the show published June 11, the *Union* reported: "Thursday was circus day, and as a matter of course everybody was in town. Robinson's circus gave us two performances, together with chuck-a-luck, monte, and other side shows. In the evening they had the largest crowd ever seen at a circus in this town. The bare-back riding of Robinson and his little boy was certainly the best ever witnessed--the rest of the bill was very common. The negro part (The Komical Ku Klux Klan) was horrible. Good order prevailed all day."

The *Union* also reported an astounding event, rarely, if ever, equalled in all of circus history. "A couple of Junction City boys learned a three-card-monte dealer traveling with the circus, a thing or two about the game. They busted him."

Robinson played Topeka on a rainy day, Saturday, June 11. Robinson, as his advertisements truthfully described him, was "The undoubted and undisputed CHAMPION BARE-BACK RIDER OF THE WORLD."

"Champion of Spain--Wearing the Gold Medal of Isabella

"Champion of France--Wearing the Ribbon of Napoleon III

"Champion of Russia--Wearing the Double Eagle

"Champion of England--Wearing Her Majesty's Crest of Honor

"Champion of Havana, Cuba--Wearing the Diamond-Studded Golden Belt

"Champion of America--Having the Favor of the People."

In Topeka, on show day, Robinson's belt was exhibited at Dr. Greeno's drug store. The *Commonwealth* described the belt as being "Made of solid gold in sections, each section representing, in *basso relievo*, the champion in some of his daring feats. The plate has an eagle on it, holding in his mouth a diamond worth \$500." Also on display were six tons of paint just received by Dr. Greeno.

According to the *Commonwealth*, June 12, "James Robinson fully sustained his world-wide renown as the champion bare-back rider. His feats are truly wonderful. Some of his feats are

only possible to the beholder. The emperor of the lion monarchs, Charles White, had the Nubidian lions under perfect control, feeding them fresh beef while in the cage. The bent was crowded in the afternoon and evening with a large and delighted audience."

Under "Local Brevities" the *Commonwealth* also mentioned: "Our city was full of people yesterday attending Robinson's circus. Several persons were arrested yesterday for drunkenness. The colored population, Kaw Charley and the Pottawatomie Indians were particularly happy."

Lawrence, Monday, June 13, was another triumph for Robinson, the *Republican Daily Journal* reporting, "Never has a circus appearing in this city been better patronized than was James Robinson's great circus last evening. Just about every inch of available room was occupied. And the 'show' deserved it."

Tuesday and Wednesday, July 12 and 13, there exhibited in Ft. Scott John Stowe's Western World Circus. According to its newspaper advertisement, the show presented "Fifty Performers. The Magnates of the Ring. FIVE LADY RIDERS. Three Good Clowns, One Hundred Horses and the Caravan of Camels." The show promised "FUN FOR EVERYBODY!" for only fifty cents, children half price.

Reports on the show are scarce, but the Ft. Scott *Daily Monitor*, July 12, stated, "Stowe and Orton's circus visits our town today and tomorrow, giving performances both afternoon and evening." There is no indication of which Orton was on the show. On the 13th the *Monitor* reported, "There was a large crowd at the circus last evening," and, on the 14th, "The crowd at the circus last evening was quite large, but not as dense as on the previous night."

O'Connor's Great Western Circus scheduled exhibitions at Chetopa for Saturday, July 23. The only references to the show are found on page three, *Southern Kansas Advance*, Chetopa, July 13. At the bottom of the page is a tiny one column ad stating, in full, "O'Connor's Great Western Circus will exhibit at Chetopa, Saturday, July 23d."

At the top of the column is the command, "GO TO O'CONNOR'S CIRCUS, on Saturday 23d."

Three other statements appeared on

WILL EXHIBIT IN FORT SCOTT,

Saturday, June 4th.



JAMES ROBINSON'S GREAT CIRCUS

AND

ANIMAL SHOW!

With his Splendid Troupe of the

LEADING

Equestrians and Gymnasts

Of the Day. THE ONLY

JAMES ROBINSON,

The Undisputed

Champion Bare-back Rider

OF THE WORLD!

James Robinson's Great Circus appeared in Fort Scott, Kansas on June 4, 1870. Pfening Archives.

page three: "O'Connor's Great Western Circus will exhibit at Chetopa, Saturday July 23d." "O'Connor's Great Circus at Chetopa, Saturday, July 23."

"The best Circus in the West will show at Chetopa, July 23rd. Boys, save up your quarters." Quoted below in its entirety is the only handout to reach print:

"A WORLD RENOWNED CIRCUS--

The Great Western Circus of Mr. O'Connor & Co., is pronounced by our exchanges to be the best Circus traveling. It comprises 100 men and 110 horses, and embraces among its riders, male and female, some of the most daring to be found in the world. La Petite Minnie, George North, and J. S. Key are unrivaled riders."

There are no reports on the attendance or the performances.

At the top of all of their ads Hemmings, Cooper & Whitby's Great Allied Exhibition of Menagerie and Circus confessed that it was "The Biggest Show in the World." It was "POSITIVELY THE LARGEST AND BEST SHOW ON EARTH" With the LARGEST MENAGERIE IN THE UNITED STATES.

"The most extensive combination ever in America Comprising Two Hundred and Ninety Men and Horses."

Despite the grandiose claims of the show, the newspapers all but ignored the aggregation which indicates that the claims were far wide of the mark. In Topeka the only mention the show received for the exhibition of Tuesday, August 16, 1870, was an ad in the *Commonwealth*, August 4. Only two members of the company were mentioned by name: Felix McDonald, the "Famous Lion Tamer and Man of Iron Nerve;" and Prof. Sewell, whose Cornet Band was to lead the entry into town at 10 a.m. on show day. Four "Lady Equestriennes," 34 male performers, 16 dens of animals and the largest and smallest elephants in America were in the company, according to the ad.

The day following Topeka, Hemmings, Cooper & Whitby performed in Burlingame, Wednesday, August 17. Except for a large advertisement, the *Weekly Osage Chronicle*, Burlingame, completely ignored this monster show.

The editor of the *Southern Kansas Advance*, Chetopa, in reviewing the exhibitions of Tuesday, August 30, chose to be clever instead of informative.

"Hemmings & Co's circus and menagerie was here yesterday, and drew a large crowd. We interviewed the fat woman, saw the anaconda, heard the lion roar, and laughed at the jokes of Charley Monroe." After the above statements the *Advance* continued the story com-

menting on the people who went "only to see the animals."

The advertisement in the *Advance* listed the following performers: Mankin and Williams, aerialists and gymnasts; Fred Herbert, gymnast; Don Santiago Gibbonois, contortionist; William Olma, "Man-Monkey;" Felix McDonald, lions; Prof. Sewell, bandmaster. The show advertised three clowns, Charley Monroe, "the Celtic Son of Momus and Comic vocalist," Clint Williams, the French "trick clown," and Joe Davidson, "THE FUNNIEST MAN IN THE WORLD."

The families of Hemmings and Whitby contributed heavily to the performance. Richard Hemmings, described as "histrionic and versatile performer," apparently was equestrian director. Miss Susan Whitby and Mrs. Richard Hemmings were billed as equestriennes, and Mrs. Hemmings doubled on the tight wire. Other riders were the juvenile Miss Minnie Marks; Master Willie Dale, bareback; Luke Rivers, scenic rider; and Ferdinand Tournaire, "the best paid rider in the profession." Serving in unknown capacities were M'lle. Alvira, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. J. Mankin, Mrs. Whitby, M'lle. Camille and M'lle. Clementina.

The most valuable assessment of Hemmings, Cooper & Whitby appeared in the Ft. Scott *Monitor* concerning the exhibitions of Saturday, September 3. "The large piles of straw and other filth near the jail are said to be among the most valuable relics left our city by Cooper & Hemmings' menagerie."

Occasionally true brothers engaged in the circus business, but more often the word appeared in show titles merely because a few "brother" shows achieved outstanding success and the word became fashionable and created an illusion of a monster exhibition combining the talents of several brothers who had but a single thought, to entertain the world.

The show-going world was well acquainted with the Sells brothers, Ringling brothers, Campbell brothers, and the Gollmar brothers. Here are some lesser "brothers" who appeared in the Kansas press:

Orton, Lemen, Harper, Bond, Bonheur, McMahon, Lamont, Cullens, Gentry, Kinnebrew, Linson, Elstun, Cole, Dean, Rentz, McDonald, Jones, Miller,

Robbins, Russell, Conroy, Atterbury, Buck, Polack, Hugo, Monroe, Dailey, Capell, Benbro, and Al G. Kelly and Miller Brothers.

Brothers were everywhere, brothers were common, but on Tuesday, October 4, 1870, there appeared in Burlingame, Kansas, the rarest bird imaginable--The Macart Sisters' Great Parisian Circus!

The advertisement in the *Weekly Osage Chronicle*, Burlingame, began with the claim, "SUPERIOR TO ALL." Like all the "brother" shows, the Parisian

were Dan Rhodes, general director, formerly with Davis and Crosbie; Fred Macart, treasurer; Jas. G. Carnahan, superintendent; and Henry Pullman, manager.

Their ad read: "THE MACART SISTERS," (Four in Number) M'QLE. KATE MACART--the most fascinating Equestrienne in the world who has long been at the head of the profession, in her numerous specialties. M'DLLE. MARIE MACART--The most accomplished of French Horsewomen, and an Artiste of fame and Celebrity, sufficient to secure a hearty welcome from an appreciative American public. Her first appearance in America. M'DLLE. ADDIE MACART--The great principal Female Equestrienne. A born Horsewoman, whose skill and dexterity, like her wonderful Grace and Beauty, is an inheritance which excites the envy of rival aspirants to Arenic celebrity. M'DLLE. BLANCH MACART--The Famous Character Rider, whose Bareback Hurdle act is pronounced the acme of Female Equestration."

Also on the bill was "THE HOLLAND FAMILY, WILLIAM, GEORGE AND CHARLES, THE GREAT GERMAN ATHLETES, GYMNASTS, and artistic exponents of physical perfection."

Prominent in the ad was another leap forward for womanhood: "A NEW FEATURE--THE BEWITCHING FEMALE CLOWN, MISS GRACE CLAYTON, COMBINING WIT, LOVELINESS, AGILITY AND HUMOR."

"The Grand Procession will form on the day of exhibition at 10 o'clock and will be led by the Gorgeous and elaborate BAND CHARIOT, imported from Paris especially for this great show. SEE IT AND BE CONVINCED."

All Burlingame undoubtedly saw the procession, but few were convinced.

The *Chronicle*, Friday, October 8, reported, "The Macart sisters' circus duly visited our place on Tuesday. They say--the sixty-two persons who visited it--that they saw not only enough, but too much for the money. But one ticket was sold for the after performance, and the purchaser wouldn't take back his money but made them go through with the programme."

The Biggest Show in the World!
HEMMINGS, COOPER & WHITBY'S
Great Allied Exhibition of
MENAGERIE AND CIRCUS.
THE ONLY TRAVELING EXHIBITION IN THE WORLD THAT DOES ALL THEY REPRESENT.
POSITIVELY THE LARGEST AND BEST SHOW ON EARTH
Will Exhibit At
FORT SCOTT,
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1870.
ADMISSION 75 Cts.; CHILDREN 50 Cts.



The Most Extensive Combination ever in America
Comprising Two Hundred and Ninety Men and Horses.
Emphatically pronounced by all Persons to be
"THE" BIG SHOW OF THE PERIOD.
COMBINING THE BEST CIRCUS IN THE WORLD
WITH THE LARGEST MENAGERIE IN THE UNITED STATES.

The Hemmings, Cooper & Whitby show appeared in Kansas in 1870. Pfening Archives.

Circus was also "the most Novel and Original ARENIC Exhibition ever organized in the World."

For its "FIRST SEASON IN AMERICA," the show engaged "the most celebrated performers in the world in every department."

The Macart sisters--Kate, Addie, Marie and Blanch--were listed as "Proprietresses." Assisting the owners

1871

White Cloud, Kansas, was host on Tuesday, May 23, 1871, to Van Amburgh & Co's., Mammoth Menagerie, Seigrist's Great French Circus and Frost's American Circus.

The coming of this great cavalcade was heralded by an advance crew of eight men and ten horses. The *White Cloud Chief*, May 18, devoted 59% of page two to advertising the show.

Surrounded by circus "news" was the obituary of Mrs. Eliza Wakefield, aged 71 years, 10 months and 28 days, who died at six o'clock a.m. Tuesday, May 9th, 1871, of dropsy of the heart.

The show had much to say about itself. Traveling with the show were 120 persons and 150 horses. The show had been on the road since 1821. Jenny Lind was the name of Prof. Nash's performing elephant. "Ladies and Children visit the Van Amburgh show by the thousands, without male escort, so completely are they protected from harm or insult." Frank Gardner and John Barry both threw double summersaults (sic) while leaping over "ten or a dozen horses."

"The Hartebeaste, Ostrich, Kangaroos, Japanese Swine, Three-Horned Spanish Bull--new to this country, and many other animals, are coming with Van Amburgh & Co. The above are from the London collection, forwarded by Dr. Livingstone, from Ethiopia (sic)."

Prof. Parmlee's Silver Cornet Band provided the music. "The Greatest bare-back performer in the arena is yet but a child--Willie O'Dale, not yet twelve years of age." Featured were the trick mules, Mungo Park and Jerry.

"A Christian education has influenced the manager of Van Amburgh & Co., to the extent that he allows no unlicensed profanity, intoxication or secular labor on the Sabbath."

"Husbands and fathers can safely leave their wives and children in the care of Van Amburgh & Co., where they will be shielded from harm or insult."

Prof. Nash and William Winner lectured on the nature and habits of the menagerie animals.

"Horace W. Nichols, Esq., the oldest and best equestrian director in the business, will direct the performances of the arena, with the Van Amburgh concentration."

"The Celebrated Kincade Family--a circus in themselves, are seven in number. They are distinguished as Riders, Vaulters, Tumblers, Acrobats and Gymnasts."

Marietta Zanfretta walked the tight rope.

A strong feature of the show was

VAN AMBURGH & CO'S

MAMMOTH MENAGERIE,

AT FORT SCOTT.

THE LARGEST AND BEST ZOOLOGICAL COLLECTION IN THE WORLD

VAN AMBURGH & CO'S.

MAMMOTH MENAGERIE



FIRST VISIT TO KANSAS.

FORT SCOTT, MONDAY, JUNE 19th, 1871.

Combined with Frost's American Circus.
FORT SCOTT, MONDAY, JUNE 19.

Augmented By

SEIGRIST'S GREAT FRENCH CIRCUS,

And the Gabriel Ravel-Zanfretta Acrobats.

Hyatt Frost is the Manager.

We have too large a Show to be Conveyed by Railroad.

ALL UNDER ONE TENT & THE LARGEST TENT IN AMERICA. FOR ONE TICKET

The Van Amburgh-Seigrist ad for the June 19, 1871 date in Fort Scott advised "First Visit to Kansas." Pfening Archives.

the Great French Circus of Mons. Francis Seigrist, consisting "mostly of children and youths, each excelling in their several departments. Also Mons. Seigrist brings with him a colony of dogs, that are of themselves a compensating entertainment."

There is a tendency among editors to declare the most recent circus to be "the best show that has ever exhibited here," and that was the opinion of the *Chief*: "The Seigrist family, the Kincade fami-

ly, the lady tight rope performer, the trained elephant, dogs and mule--all, whether men, women, boys, girls or animals, perform their parts well. To crown all, the managers are gentlemen, and everything is conducted decently and in order."

One puzzling little item of gossip concerning the Van Amburgh show appeared in the *Weekly Kansas Chief*, of Troy, Kansas, July 24, 1873, which refers to a reporter who was smitten by a circus girl.

"Our allusion, last week, to following of lewd women attached to circuses, riled the *Republican* (competing newspaper) dreadfully. Twitting on facts hurts. It is notorious to every person about Troy, that one of the virtuous editors of the *Republican* tacked on to a female of loose reputation, attached to a circus which exhibited here over a year ago, and became so enamored of her, that he hired a buggy, and tagged after the show to all the neighboring towns. That sounds a little like a Dime Novel, too!"

The circus season of 1871 opened with a dilemma for the citizens of Topeka. Old John Robinson, Thursday, June 1, or Van Amburgh & Company, Saturday, June 3.

Billboards were rare and most shows carried their own Van Amburgh erected a board 250' long on Fifth street. John Robinson put up a huge board at Sixth and Quincy streets. At intervals billposters would cover their rival's paper with lithographs of their own show. Both shows advertised extensively in the newspapers. Van Amburgh drove about town a wagon with side boards twenty feet high covered with lithographs. Both shows supplied the newspapers with handouts extolling their features. Van Amburgh's stories were polite boastings and totally ignored Robinson. Robinson, however, attacked Van Amburgh in a scurrilous manner.

John A. Wood, press agent for Old John Robinson, in a story published in the *Commonwealth*, May 30, addressed himself to A. P. Newkirk, press agent for Van Amburgh, as follows, "You will have to put a little less whiskey in your water, which if all reports be true, you have failed to do so far. This visiting saloons and endeavoring to impress upon the occupants thereof, what a bril-

liant position you once occupied as a prominent pleader at the bar of 'Bacchus,' will not go down with an intelligent or enlightened community."

After this warming up, Mr. Wood had a few words to say about the Van Amburgh menagerie.

"The truth of the matter is this, the great Menagerie which will visit Topeka under the name of the Mammoth Van Amburgh, consists of just eleven cages of old, dilapidated, worn-out, sickly-looking animals, consisting principally of three horned bulls and billy goats--in fact, it is more strongly impregnated with goat than anything else; so strong that in St. Joseph, Missouri, on Friday night last, the audience rose in a body and left the tent, thoroughly disgusted with the nauseating stench that arose from a cage of common billy goats, that was assembled as one of the curiosities of this great show."

Old John Robinson, according to the *Commonwealth* on June 2, paraded into Topeka at about ten o'clock led by a "magnificently carved band car, containing Prof. McCann's Brooklyn military band, composed of twenty pieces. Next came the tableau car mounted with a Brazilian tiger and four young ladies seated upon the corners, representing America, Europe, Asia and Africa. Next was the pony car, followed by a monster elephant. Following after these were sixteen cages of animals. This splendid cortege passed through the principal streets, to the admiration of thousands."

Huge crowds packed the tent which seated 3000, both afternoon and evening. The Topeka papers praised the performance. The *Record*, June 7, reported an innovation. "The crowning glory of the entertainment, and the feature which has induced us to write this notice without fear, favor or hope of reward, was the absence of the time-honored nuisance who usually sells lemonade to the audience, with his unearthly cry of 'ice cold lemonade ladies and gentlemen, jiss from the north side of the north pole.' Instead of this being, the attendants dealt out free ice water to every one who desired it, without any fuss. This improvement should be adopted by all traveling companies."

We can only assume that the glass was carefully wiped after each use.

The *Commonwealth*, without divulging its source, reported that Old John Robinson took in \$2,832.

On Saturday, June 3, as advertised, Van Amburgh & Company's Mammoth Menagerie Combined with Frost's

SATURDAY MORNING, APRIL 29 1871

Fort Scott, Saturday, May 13th.

FOR ONE DAY ONLY!

John Robinson's

COMBINATION

MENAGERIE AND CIRCUS!



The Largest and Most Extensive

MENAGERIE!

The Greatest and Most

CELEBRATED CIRCUS IN THE WORLD

Principal among the many Distinguished Attaches of the ARENIC Department, will be found the Famous Artists:

MR. ROBERT STICKNEY, The Wonderful Principal Equestrian.
MR. FRANK ROBINSON, The Inimitable Bareback Rider.
MR. WILLIAM CONRAD, The Celebrated Four-Horse Equestrian.
MR. JOHN WILSON, The Celebrated Four-Horse Equestrian.
MISS IDA STICKNEY, The Beautiful and Graceful Equestrienne.
LA PETITE MINNIE, The Champion Child Rider of the World.
Mlle. FRANCIS, In her Brilliant and Wonderful Act.
MAD. MARGUERITE.

The John Robinson Circus exhibited in a number of Kansas towns during the 1871 season. Pfening Archives.

American Circus augmented by Seigrist's Great French Circus and the Gabriel Ravel-Zanfretta acrobats exhibited in Topeka at the corner of Eighth street and Kansas avenue. The show bragged that "We have too large a show to be conveyed by railroad."

Van Amburgh came overland from Oskaloosa where exhibitions were given Thursday, June 1.

In reviewing the circus the *Commonwealth* refuted the claims of Old John

Robinson by reporting, "Everyone was pleased with the circus and menagerie, and in conclusion we assure our readers that Van Amburgh Co's show is not a 'humbug.' You will be repaid by visiting it."

The *Record* commented, "The crowd is the largest ever in attendance on a menagerie or circus in this city."

From Topeka Van Amburgh moved on to Lawrence for exhibitions on Monday, June 5. The show was well received. Although no paper carried a review, the *Western Home Journal*, June 8, reported, "A SPLENDID BAND--The band under the direction of Mr. E. M. Parmelee, that accompanied Van Amburgh's show, is certainly one of the finest we ever heard. Musical men tell us it is one of the first in the country. Mr. Parmelee's cornet is of solid silver, and cost \$275. It was presented to him by the great musical house of Chicago, Lyon & Healey. We understand that Mr. Parmelee intends returning to Lawrence at the close of the circus season, and purchasing some property for speculation."

Old John Robinson played other dates in Kansas before the Topeka stand. On Friday, May 19, the show was advertised for Chetopa, the only evidence being the ad in the *Southern Kansas Advance*, May 15. Mentioned in the ad were some of the "distinguished Attaches of the ARENIC DEPARTMENT:

"MR. ROBERT STICKNEY, the Wonderful Principal Equestrian

"MR. FRANK ROBINSON the Inimitable Bareback Rider

"MR. JOHN WILSON, the Celebrated Four-Horse Equestrian

"MISS IDA STICKNEY, the Beautiful and Graceful Equestrienne

"LA PETITE MINNIE, the Champion Child Rider of the World."

The show boasted "FIVE GREAT CLOWNS," Samuel Stickney, William Conrad, Archie Campbell, Hiram Marke and John Lowlow. Conrad, in addition to clowning, presented his "Celebrated Troupe of Performing Dogs and Monkeys."

The Chetopa ad presented interesting description of the menagerie.

"In the Zoological Department will be found the most varied and extensive collection of wild animals ever exhibited in our collection, and among which



In 1871, Agnes Lake brought Lake's Hippo Olympiad into Kansas. She was perhaps the finest female executive the business has known. Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

"The show grounds," according to the *Commonwealth*, "presented the appearance of a halting caravansary. Two very large and commodious tents were erected, one for the menagerie and the other for the circus. In the rear of these were canvas stables, containing a stud of ninety-five fine horses, superintended by Peter Vaughn, and near by was the Hotel de Homer, where all the employees of the establishment satisfied the cravings of their appetites. Everything about the stables and hotel was in the most perfect order. Passing from these interesting places, under the conduct of Mr. Wood, the affable and gentlemanly news agent, we interviewed (sic) the ticket wagon, a perfectly wonderful piece of workmanship. Inside, a perfect palace with every convenience of a costly suite of rooms, Mr. George N. Robinson, the treasurer, was handing out tickets to the waiting thousands."

Connected with the menagerie tent "is the circus proper, capable of seating comfortably three thousand people. Everything, and more than was presented upon the bills, was presented. The

grand entry was a most brilliant affair. Twelve entry suits of red, blue and black silk velvet, adorning the twelve beautiful horses, passing to and fro, reminded one of the splendors of dissolving views."

Singled out for praise was the "barrel performance" of George Slowman. Other commendable features were the bareback riding of Master Frank and "the beautiful and graceful" riding of Minnie Marks. The reporter found the performances of Mr. and Mrs. Sam Stickney to be "delightful." Robert Stickney, "the champion horseback rider of the world" performed the daring feat of turning a double somersault over three men, piled *a la* cannon ball, and mounted on three horses."

The dogs and monkeys of William Conrad, the four-horse act of John Wilson and the daring horsemanship of Black Lewis were outstanding in the eyes of the *Commonwealth* reporter. "The entertainment was interspersed with new and laughable comic songs and comicalities by the prince of clowns, John Lolo (sic)."

The show closed with trick mules and the humorous Ku Klux Klan, an act of unknown qualities. Both performances drew full houses.

Old John played Lawrence, Friday, June 2, but the press failed to comment.

On Saturday, June 10, Cole's Colossal Circus and Animal Exhibition Combined appeared at Ft. Scott. The only information in the press was an ad that ran in the *Monitor* on June 9, the day before the exhibitions and nothing was published following the show.

The ad featured "Three Great Bareback Riders," M'lle. Caroline, "from the Cirque Napoleon;" Miles Orton and "his infant son, Claude;" and Young Leon, "the Champion Boy Rider."

On the trapeze were the Maretta Sisters, Imogene, Millie and La Petite Rosalie, "who for their grace, loveliness, consummate skill and incomparable daring are confessedly without compeers."

Heading the bill was HERR PAULSCHOFF who at the conclusion of the performance entered the den of lions and caused them to leap banners, jump through hoops and in a fearless finale fed the lions raw meat from his bare hands.

The show boasted of a herd of camels and performing elephants. Prof. Ki exhibited the "Liliputian Elephant."

"The procession at 10 o'clock a.m. consists of the GOLDEN MUSIC CAR! containing the Bismarck Prussian Band of 16 members, clad in the style of uniform and helmets worn by the Band that preceded the entry of King William and the Prussian Army into Paris, followed by the herd of towering camels and their Arabian attendants; the Lilliputian Elephant, Sultan; the Cavalcade of Knights and Ladies fair, clad in real ancient armor. Next the Vans, Wagons, Cars and Carriages, and finally Fiske, Gould, Greeley and other celebrities and caricature, 10 feet high, making with out doubt cavil or dispute, the FINEST DEMONSTRATIVE PARADE ever given as a gratuity to the public."

One exceedingly rare feature was announced in the ad:

"The CYNOCEPHALUS, [the dog faced baboon or the fabled race of dog-headed men] The Indescribable Nondescript, is in possession of the management and will be introduced to the astonishment of all."

"Observe, Admission only 50 cents. Children under ten, 25 cents."

Lake's Hippo-Olympiad and Mammoth Circus returned to Kansas in 1871. When the show played Lawrence in 1867, it was managed by the owner, William Lake, but following his murder in the circus ring while performing as a clown, at Granby, Missouri, in 1869, management was thrust upon his wife, Agnes Lake. Madam Lake was eminently successful as a manager and at the same time continued her leading role in *Mazeppa*.

The Kansas press when speaking of Agnes Lake assumed an attitude of awe and pity. Pity for the poor widow who witnessed the murder of her husband. Pity for the frail woman forced to carry the load of management. The sentimentality of the press undoubtedly gave an advantage to Madam Lake, but the advantage was unnecessary. The murder of William Lake was a tragic act, but the character of his widow, courageous and determined, could withstand any assault. Quite properly, the press looked upon Agnes Lake with awe.

The following appeared in the Topeka *Daily Commonwealth*, August 1: "There

are few women, we imagine, who labor under the delusion that they could manage a circus. We know the fair sex have an idea that they can do anything within the range of human possibilities, and confidently refer us to the examples of Joan of Arc, Madam Roland, Miss Burdett Coutts, Dr. Mary Walker and Mrs. R. R. McGregor to show how equally with men women have distinguished themselves in the arts of peace and war. Those illustrious females have, indeed, done much for their strong minded admirers of today, and made histories to silence many a scoffer at woman's ability to do and to suffer; but we are pretty sure that a challenge to an honest and friendly rivalry in show management a few years back would have resulted, in the decided and incontrovertible assertion of masculine superiority. There is no doubt about the grandeur of the character of the woman who fights the battles of her country, surrenders her life in devotion to principle, erects public edifices for the comfort of her suffering fellow creatures, or consecrates her life to the service of ailing humanity; everybody admits that. But if such a woman excites admiration, what must be thought of the one who embarks her all in the most precarious of all enterprises, and with a few lieutenants, and a score or so of retainers, sets out with a dreary prospect before her, to travel in all kinds of weather, through hundreds of miles of alternating dust and mud to run a dreadful gauntlet of uncompromising sheriffs, and to fight her way back to the place of starting, richer in purse than she was before? Is not her heroism sublime? Does she not call for our best wishes, and for our fervent prayers for her success?

"Such a woman is Madam Agnes Lake, who is now making a tour through the west with the circus which bears her name.

"The well known showman, Wm. Lake, having died by the hand of an assassin two years ago, the entire management of the concern devolved upon her, and although but a woman, her administration has ever since been so successful that she now has one of the best circuses in the country."

"Although but a woman," indeed!

The Hippo-Olympiad was traveling by rail when it entered Kansas returning

from a tour of the Pacific Coast. From Denver the show jumped to Salina for its first exhibition in Kansas, Saturday, July 29. The parade was limited to a bandwagon circulating through the streets. Back on the lot at one p.m. the public was treated to a balloon ascension featuring Prof. Miles. In Salina the flight was a disappointment.

According to the *Saline County Journal*, Salina, "The balloon ascension was not the greatest success in the World. The balloon ascended but Prof. Miles didn't, and thus was our special artist deprived of a visit to the stars. The 'parachute' must have been indisposed, for the balloon seemed to shoot off before there was a good ready. The 'ship of air' turned a complete somersault after going up a few feet, and caught fire. The fire was speedily extinguished; so was the balloon."

The *Journal* reported that, "The band played like blazes, the horses ran like lightening and the men wriggled and twisted wonderfully. Madam Agnes was bound to the wild horse of Tartary, while her 'delicate and sensitive form' was hurled through space quicker than a mule can kick. *Mazepa* was 'powerfully' acted."

In conclusion the *Journal* stated, "Our impressions of the circus and its troupe, at this distant date (August 3), are, that lots of hard earned dollars have been suddenly taken out of the country."

The *Abilene Chronicle*, speaking of the exhibition of Monday, July 31, dismissed the entire show with two short sentences. "Lake's circus exhibited in Abilene on Monday. The attendance was large at each performance." The *Chronicle* missed the big news of the day. Wild Bill Hickok attended the show and was smitten by Agnes Lake. For four years Hickok wooed Agnes and it is an acknowledgment of the courage of both that in 1875 they married. Hickok was murdered in 1876, and Agnes died at her home in Jersey City, New Jersey, in 1907, the day before her 85th birthday.

Following Abilene the Hippo-Olympiad moved to Topeka for exhibitions, Tuesday, August 1. The advertisements in the Topeka papers gave top billing to Agnes Lake. The only other

LAKE'S Hippo-Olimpiad and Mammoth Circus.



THE GREATEST AND MOST THOROUGHLY organized, and universally popular Show on the Continent, enlarged and re-appointed especially for a Southern tour, under the management of the celebrated Equestrienne,

Madame AGNES LAKE.

E. J. Mills.....General Director
J. M. Wickwire.....Contracting Agent
Charles C. Pell.....Superintendent

Madame LAKE, in rendering a grateful recognition for the manifold and oft-repeated favors she has received at the hands of the Southern people the many seasons the

"HIPPO-OLYMPIAD"

has exhibited in the South, is pleased to be enabled to assure her patrons that she visits them this season with a

Troupe of the Leading Artists of the Day.

GYMNASTS, ATHLETES, AND EQUESTRIENNES.

The Lake Circus made an extensive Southern tour early in 1871 before heading west for the summer. Pfening Archives.

performer mentioned was Levi J. North, but the ad did carry the names of C. C. Pell, superintendent, and Sam H. Joseph, director of publications.

A handout in the *Commonwealth* on show day mentioned the riding of Agnes and her daughter, Emma.

"The principal members of the company besides Mrs. Lake and her daughter, are: Mr. Levi J. North, the accomplished maitre du cirque, with his educated horse Mars; Moody Cook, the wonderful somersault rider; Mr. George Richards, athlete and cannon ball juggler; Messrs. William and Mankin,

gymnasts, and Messrs. John Davenport, Ned Ainsley and Joseph Ginger, clowns. One of the attractions of the show is a free balloon ascension, under the direction of Mr. R. E. J. Miles, Mrs. Lake's first lieutenant."

The ascension drew a large crowd to the lot on Kansas avenue between Eighth and Ninth streets. The hot air balloon rose about a quarter of a mile into the sky and five minutes later the fearless "aeronaut" came to earth between Third and Fourth streets on Topeka Avenue, a distance of about nine blocks. It was probably the first flight in the city's history.

The Topeka city council on August 1 discovered a new source of revenue, inspired, no doubt, by the crowds attending Lake's Hippo-Olympiad. Hereafter, circuses were to be licensed at \$100 per day. At the same council meeting an ordinance was passed establishing a fine of \$100 for operating a brothel. The fine brought the city more money than did the circus license.

An advertisement in the Junction City *Weekly Union*, July 29, listed the following route for the Hippo-Olympiad: Topeka, Tuesday, August 1; Leavenworth, Wednesday, August 2; Wyandotte, Thursday, August 3; Lawrence, Friday, August 4; Wamego, Saturday, August 5; Manhattan, Monday, August 7.

Junction City was billed for Tuesday, August 8. After the show had come and gone, the *Union* reported that, "Tuesday was circus day. Thunder and lightening and rain made things look rather gloomy. The rain, however, did not last long, and though the morning was cloudy the afternoon was quite clear. The band paraded the streets. Their instruments needed cleaning; otherwise they would pass very well. The balloon ascension was a leading feature, and was pronounced a success. The circus performance was good, and the entire affair would have been splendid had the opening scene been omitted. The rendition of *Mazeppa* was horrible. The equestrian feats of Mr. Cook were truly wonderful. His backward somersaulting through balloons, from the back of his horse, is an excellence attained by few in the profession. The riding of Miss Emma Lake was good. Levi J. North's trained horse is a model.

The contortionist performed his marvelous acts in a manner that elicited universal applause. The clown's jokes were new, and appeared to take. The trained dog afforded great amusement. We understand the Hippo-Olympiad afforded general satisfaction."

Madam Lake made an extensive tour

NEW YORK CIRCUS

From Hippodrome Building, 14th Street, opposite the Academy of Music, New York.

L. B. LENT, DIRECTOR.

AT BOSTON FAIR GROUNDS,
Corner Newton street and Harrison avenue,
MAY 13, 14, 15, 16 & 17.

EXHIBITIONS—AFTERNOON at 2; EVENING at 8.
Admission 50 cts.; Children under 10 years, 25 cts. Tickets
or sale at Oliver Ditson's, 247 Washington street.
It should be distinctly understood that this establishment is
The Only First Class Circus in America.
With the New York Circus will be found the



Five Best Riders in America.

A combination which cannot be equalled in any Circus Troupe on the globe.
The Circus performances will conclude with the famous
Fairy Spectacular Fantomime of

JACK, THE GIANT KILLER!
PROF. CHAS. ROSWOLD'S BRASS AND REED BAND
of TWENTY-FIVE MUSICIANS will parade the streets
about 10 A. M. in the GOLDEN BAND CHARIOT, drawn
by TWENTY-FOUR of the HANDSOMEST HORSES
that the World can produce.
The NEW YORK CIRCUS TRNT will be BRILLIANTLY
ILLUMINATED WITH GAS. M. m. y.

L. B. Lent's New York Circus traveled by rail into Kansas in 1872. Pfening Archives.

of eastern Kansas playing Chetopa, Saturday, August 12. The *Southern Kansas Advance* carried one handout in advance of the show and the same ad that was used everywhere. The ad mentioned exhibits at Burlington, Thursday, August 10, and Humboldt, Friday, August 11.

The only mention the show received for the exhibition at Ft. Scott, Saturday, August 19, was an ad in the *Mirror*.

S. H. Joseph, director of publications, fared no better with the *Miami County Republican* for the performances at Paola, Tuesday, August 22. The ad did list billings for La Cygne, Wednesday, August 23, and Pleasanton, Thursday, August 24.

The Topeka *State Journal*, August 23, 1907, carried an extensive obituary of

Agnes Lake, bearing a New York date line.

"Mrs. Agnes Hickok, widow of 'Wild Bill' Hickok, better known as Mrs. Agnes Lake, who died last night at 791 Montgomery street, Jersey City, the residence of her son-in-law, Gil Robinson, who was the son of the old circus man, John Robinson. Mrs. Hickok would have been 85 years old tomorrow."

Emma Lake, daughter of Agnes, and an outstanding "high school" rider, was married to Gil Robinson.

"Mrs. Hickok was born in Doehme, Alsace, in 1826. Her parents name was Mersman. They came to this country when she was about 4 years old and settled in Cincinnati. When Agnes was about 17 there came to Cincinnati the famous Spalding and Rogers circus.

It had with it an attractive young fellow named Lake who was a clown. Agnes fell in love with him. She ran away with him and married him and from that time on her life was linked inseparably with the circus. Her husband's real name was Thatcher of the widely known family in Bordenstown, N.J."

Through boredom Agnes learned to walk a wire and earned a spot in the circus performance and eventually "she was accounted the best slack wire performer the sawdust ring ever saw."

"For nearly fifteen years she worked with her husband. They saved their money and in the late fifties her husband formed a partnership with John Robinson. Robinson & Lake's circus followed. The partnership lasted about three years, when each partner went his own way and Lake started a circus of his own. It was of the old time variety, with forty or fifty wagons.

"With the Robinson & Lake circus there had been a small boy named Gordon (sic) picked up in a hotel in Pontiac, Mich., to help Frederick Bailey, one of the chief employees. He took Bailey's name eventually. When the Lake show was started Mrs. Lake insisted against her husband's judgment upon making the boy, who had now grown up, general agent of the show. That boy was the late James A. Bailey of the Barnum & Bailey shows."

The obituary states that Madam Lake made an extensive study of *Mazeppa* as



presented by Menken, and spent a winter playing the part in Berlin. When she returned to America *Mazeppa* was adapted to the circus ring and hippodrome and became the feature attraction of Lake's circus.

"The Lake circus used to strike out for what was then known as the Far West, Kansas and Colorado. The circus stopped at Granby, Mo., one day and while there Lake had trouble with a desperado named 'Jake' Gillen, who sneaked up behind him and shot him through the heart. Mrs. Lake then went on with the show and made money."

"One day in Abilene, Kan., 'Wild Bill' Hickok, the law and order man for frontier towns, good fellow, generally, with plenty of notches on his gun, caught sight of Mrs. Lake. It was love at first sight. This was in the early '70s. He said he was going to marry her, and always kept on Mrs. Lake's trail. He wrote to her and came to see her as often as possible.

"'Wild Bill' insisted on marrying Mrs. Lake and she went out to Cheyenne in 1875, where she married him. They were happy together and he drifted to Deadwood, Dakota, which had just become known, as a prospector. Mrs. Lake went to Covington the following summer and while there received word that 'Wild Bill' had been killed by 'Jack' McCall, a desperado. McCall was hanged for the murder.

"Mrs. Hickok's body will be put in a vault in Jersey City," the obituary stat-

This is the L. B. Lent band chariot which so impressed the Topeka press in 1872. This rare photo of the Fielding built wagon was taken in Erie, Pennsylvania about 1871. It was later on the Barnum show, appearing in its 1904 parade.

ed in conclusion, "and later in the fall will be taken to Cincinnati for burial. She was a devout Catholic."

1872

The *Southern Kansas Advance*, Cheyenne, reported, Wednesday, April 24, 1872, that, "The original Dan Rice, who has been a dozen times dead and come back to life again, will be here with his circus one week from next Saturday."

Dan Rice's Paris Pavilion Circus, "the largest and only truly fashionable Circus on this Continent, THE ACME OF ARENIC EXCELLENCE" scheduled Cheyenne for Saturday, May 4. Other dates listed in Rice's advertisement were Vinita, Sunday, May 5, and Parsons, Monday, May 6. Featured was the Nelson Family of gymnasts. According to the *Advance*, May 8, "Dan Rice's circus drew a big crowd here on Saturday last."

The first show of the season for Topeka was James Robinson's Great Circus, Museum and Animal Show, Monday, May 6. On the day following the exhibitions the *Daily Commonwealth* reported, "The great James Robinson

avored Topeka yesterday with the first circus of the season, and as a matter of course an immense assemblage of all fun seekers was the consequence. The entire performance was a grand success, and only lacked one essential of making it a model show, and that was the entire absence of any lady performers. In our estimation, a circus without lady performers is like Hamlet without a ghost. The trapeze performance was very fine. "The feats of contortion and tumbling by the Davenport brothers was superior to anything of the kind ever produced by any living performers.

"The best feature of the show was the daring feats of horsemanship by James Robinson, justly termed the champion bareback rider of the world. Riding in every possible position on the horse, the wonder to the spectator is, how he can retain his position. He concludes his performance by turning a back somersault through hoops, a feat performed by no other bareback rider."

"While Master Robinson was performing with his trick pony last night," according to the *Commonwealth*, "the pony became stubborn, went to 'bucking,' which resulted in throwing him (the boy) over the pony's head. Although the boy was trampled on by the pony, he did not appear hurt, and the show went on."

In another column the *Commonwealth* stated, "The receipts of Robinson's circus yesterday lacked \$10 of liquidat-

ing the city license--\$105. The prime cause is the fact that all the farmers are planting."

The *Record* did not share the opinion of the *Commonwealth* regarding the quality of the show, and in a sour note commented, "Robinson's show in Topeka last Monday caused much labor to be lost and much money to be wasted. As a show it was passable, probably a good enough one for its pretensions."

On May 7, the *Commonwealth* had commented on the small receipts of the Robinson show, but on the 15th the paper ran a retraction.

"A report has somehow gained currency that James Robinson's Circus, which recently visited this city was slimly patronized while here. In justice to Mr. Robinson and his excellent company, we deem it our duty to correct this erroneous impression. During the afternoon performance the capacious tent was only about one-half filled, but in the evening the attendance was so great that numbers were unable to obtain seats. We never saw a larger crowd at a circus in Topeka but once before and that was at old John Robinson's last season."

James Robinson played Abilene, Friday, May 10, without eliciting any comment from the local press.

On Saturday, May 11, exhibitions were given at Salina. An advertisement in the *Saline County Journal*, May 2, claimed "45 MALE AND FEMALE ARTISTS." The *Commonwealth* in Topeka had complained of the absence of female performers, but the Salina ad carried the name of M'lle. Celeste Stafley. Other performers named were Samuel Shappee, J. Whitney, the Davenport Brothers, Wm. Gorman, Wm. Buke and Phil Diefenback. The show claimed "TWENTY-ONE ACTS IN THE RING!," including "The Wonderful Man Monkey," "The Bear and the Sentinel," "The Komikal Ku Klux Klan," and, in larger type, "The Equestrian Dog, Phil Sheridan." Top billing went to Robinson "CARRYING HIS SON AND PUPIL, MASTER EUGENE, the most wonderful Boy Equestrian an age ever has or ever will boast of."

The "GREAT GOLDEN CAR OF THE CONQUEROR" circulated through the principal streets carrying Prof. Quinn's Chicago Light Guard Band.

A reporter for the *Journal* got a slightly different view of James Robinson than circus owners were wont to show the press: "We interviewed Jim, the lion of the occasion, who cursed pretty strong because pluvius contributions had somewhat muddled the roads, thereby preventing a very large influx of sight-seers, from the yeomanry. We told Jim that it was a good thing for the crops, whereupon he fiercely retorted, 'D--n the crops!' As we were opposed to profanity, and judging him much out of good humor, we slid from him and stationed ourselves high up, midway of those horribly hard-cushioned seats, to take a look at things."

In conclusion, the reporter commented, "As a whole, the entertainment was good--though there are plenty of chances for improvement. The troupe started West for Denver Sunday morning."

On Friday, May 24, 1872, Topeka had the opportunity to inspect a myriad of wonders when Older's Museum, Circus & Menagerie came to town. Among the curios was the Cardiff Giant, leased from Barnum. The menagerie also boasted some rarities, "Sea Tiger, Sea Dog, Seals, Shark, Uncouth Sea

The 1872 Barnum Circus, the first true railroad show, toured Kansas. Circus World Museum collection.

P. T. BARNUM'S

GREAT
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CONSISTING OF
MUSEUM,
Menagerie,
Caravan,
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AND
DAN CASTELLO'S
CHASTE AND REFINED CIRCUS,
IN SIX SEPARATE COLOSSAL TENTS.
Will Exhibit in St Louis 1 Week
August 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

(Giving three full and undivided exhibitions each day of the entire evening Shows, morning afternoon and evening. Doors open at 10 a. m., 1 and 7 p. m. Hippodrome performance commences at 11 a. m., 2 and 8 p. m. Admission to the Seven Colossal Shows, only 50 cents, children half price.
This is positively the largest and most attractive combination of exhibitions ever known and remains absolute & without a parallel in the history of the world, and embraces in the various departments of the Exposition.

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The entire pavilions are brilliantly illuminated in the evening by 4,000 gas jets.
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FREE ADMISSION to all who purchase the Life of P. T. Barnum, written by himself, nearly 800 pages, master gilt, steel portrait, 25 full page engravings, reduced from \$2.50 to \$1.50, and a 50 cent ticket given to each purchaser. To be had of the agent on the day of exhibition.



Cow, Baby Elephant Only Fifty Inches in Height." Featured was a "Monster Whale."

Older advertised "Equestrian Stars, over Thirty in Number," but the only performers named were THE SAN-YEAHS, English gymnasts, "single and Double Trapeze, Flying Leaps, feats of Strength on the Flying Rings." More space was given to listing the staff: J. M. Chandler, general agent; E. A. Alexander, assistant agent; W. R. McLane, manager; S. Brady, assistant manager and receiver of tickets; Frank Stevens, treasurer; Robert W. Fryer, equestrian director; Prof. Lederhaus, musical director; and P. A. Older, proprietor and general director.

Prominently positioned in the newspaper ad was the following declaration, "TAKE PARTICULAR NOTICE--This Tripartite Exhibition is not a Railroad Show, but travels by wagons. 150 HORSES are used to transport it through the country; also, quite an ARMY OF MEN are employed--about 100 in number."

Older was unable to give a matinee due to late arrival in Topeka, the show being stuck in the mud between Topeka and Oskaloosa. The one performance packed the tent with an estimated 3,000 patrons. The *Commonwealth* described it as "the best ever exhibited in this city." Older's tickets sold for 50 cents, adults; children under 10, 25 cents. These became the standard prices in Topeka for the next 40 years.

Lent's New York Circus was the third show to play Topeka in the season of 1872, exhibiting, Tuesday, July 30. L. B. Lent was a showman who was approaching the end of a highly successful career and his New York Circus was the crowning achievement. It was a first-class show boasting some of the greatest performers of the 19th Century, Charles W. Fish, bareback rider; M'lle. Caroline Holland, equestrienne; William Dutton, equestrian; La Petite Franklin, "the Beautiful Baby Hurdle Rider on his fairy bareback ponies;" and John Henry Cooke, champion horseman. "The Five Best Riders in America."

Clowns were Julian Kent, Geo. Nice, and Hy. Albert Jee. Prof. Charles Boswold's New York Circus Musical Brigade, a brass and reed band of twenty.

Barnum received most of the credit for the show that carried his name, but in reality the tremendously innovative aggregation was the work of two men, William C. Coup and Dan Castello. Both men had extensive backgrounds with traveling shows. Castello, it will be remembered, took the first circus over the trans-continental railroad to San Francisco.

Railroad flat cars were not properly constructed for circus use. The height of cars varied and each one had a brake wheel at the end, right in the middle. Coup's idea was to bridge the space between cars with steel plates and load the wagons up a ramp and over a bridge of cars until the train was loaded. The plan required daily removal of brake wheels.

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